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Thesis

THE STORY OF MEDEA IN WORLD DRAMA

by

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. Background and Purpose of Thesis

The incredible tenacity of ancient legends has been reflected time and time again in the Literature, Art, and Music of all great civilizations. The classical myths of Greece, which grew out of stories surrounding the fabulous lives of the pagan gods and goddesses, gave rise to a Golden Age of Literature that has never been surpassed, perhaps not even equaled. The tremendous impact of the Greek civilization, exemplified in its literature, has been felt in all the great eras that have followed up to the present time. Stories which originated three thousand years ago or more still live today.

The Jason and Medea myth is an example of a popular Greek legend whose theme has been re-echoed through the ages. Euripides was the first to sound the strident notes of this story in his powerful tragedy Medea. Since then innumerable dramatists have seized upon the dominant features Euripides' play to retell the story of the savage Colchian princess and her Argonaut consort. Many allusions to Jason's expedition are found in literary works besides the drama. The story of the Argonautic expedition is related in Ovid's Metamorphoses,

and references to it are also found in Milton's Paradise Lost, in Kingsley's novel Westward Ho, and in The Autocrat of the Breakfast Table by Oliver Wendell Holmes. William Morris wrote a long poem entitled The Life and Death of Jason; Hawthorne's Tanglewood Tales includes a selection called "The Golden Fleece"; and William Rose Benet, the modern American poet, again refers to the Greek myth in his poem The Argo's Chantey.[1]

The story of Medea has also found its way into art and music. It is said that Julius Caesar paid a vast sum for a painting of Medea which he placed in a temple built in his forum.[2] Wall paintings of Medea have been found among ancient art works, and a modern painting by Walter Mc Ewen hangs in the Congressional Library in Washington. Cherubini, an early nineteenth century Italian composer, wrote an opera using the Medea theme, which was the first instance of this legend being put to music.

The story of Jason and Medea, therefore, has continued to be a popular source of literary and artistic expression. The drama has been its most effective instrument, and it is through this medium that the story has continued to live and to appeal. My thesis will trace the development of the Medea legend in world drama, beginning with Euripides' tragedy and ending with Maxwell Anderson's.

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1. Frances E. Sabin, Classical Myths that Live Today, p. 242.
2. Philip W. Harsh, A Handbook of Classical Drama, Chapt. I, p. 173.

To my knowledge there are sixteen extant plays in the history of the drama which make use of some phase of the Medea motif.[1] Five of these were not available to me even in the original. From those that I could obtain I have chosen the eight which best lend themselves to comparative study and which reflect certain periods of the drama. The dramatists to be represented are Euripides, Seneca, Pierre Corneille, Richard Glover, Franz Grillparzer, Ernest Legouve, Henrik Ibsen[2] and Maxwell Anderson. These plays historically cover the two great ancient civilizations of Greece and Rome, and then beginning with the seventeenth century touch upon every century up to and including the present. The drama of Greece, Rome, France, England, Germany, Norway, and America will be considered in my thesis.

The character of Medea, or of the corresponding heroine, will be my main concern. I shall make particular note of the dramatist's conception of her character, whether or not his treatment is sympathetic, the amount of emphasis placed on sorcery and barbarism, and other motivating factors. Dominant themes will also be considered, particularly those which recur

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1. Euripides, Seneca, De la Peruse, Corneille, Longepierre, Pellegrin Clement, Glover, Grillparzer, Read, Legouve, Ibsen, Mendes, Lenormand, Buel, Anderson.
2. I am departing somewhat from Greek legend in bringing Henrik Ibsen's A Doll's House into my study. The character of Nora, however, and her relation to Torvald offers an interesting comparison to Euripides' Medea. Ibsen's approach to life is very similar to that of Euripides even though a span of over two thousand years separated the two dramatists.

in all or several of the plays. I shall compare variations in plot and note the general technique and language of the dramatist.

Euripides' plot for his Medea sprang directly from popular legend. Therefore, I shall include in my thesis a brief summary of the Jason and Medea myth as it was known to the ancient Greeks, beginning with the search for the Golden Fleece. Then I shall take up chronologically each of the eight plays, including an introductory section on the dramatist, his life, his period and the drama of the time. My essential purpose is to trace the origin and development of this old Greek myth in world drama, comparing the differences in technique as they apply to the characteristics of the dramatist himself, and as they reflect the tenor of the period in which he lived.

2. The Story in Greek Mythology

A certain queen in Thessaly, through the help of Mercury, sent her two children away on the back of a ram with golden fleece. The queen feared the jealousy of the king's new wife, the children's stepmother, and arranged for their escape to keep them from harm. While flying through the air the little girl, Helle, fell off into the sea which was later called Hellespont. The ram continued to Colchis with Phryxus on his back, and King Aeetes of Colchis received the boy hospitably. The ram was sacrificed, and the Golden Fleece was placed in a consecrated grove under the care of a sleepless dragon.

The fame of the Golden Fleece spread, and years later in another kingdom in Thessaly, a group of young heroes prepared to set out on an adventurous quest for the fleece. Jason, the leader of the expedition, had been induced by his Uncle Pelias to undertake this dangerous journey. Jason was rightful heir to the crown, but his wily uncle seized upon the search for the Golden Fleece as a means of postponing Jason's accession to the throne. And being young and daring, Jason was willing and anxious to set out with his companions for the unknown land of Colchis.

A man named Argus built a ship big enough for fifty men, and the bold youths sailed away from the shores of Greece. They had many harrowing experiences before they reached Colchis, such as the difficult passage through the two floating

islands called the Symplegades. But they landed safely at Colchis, and Jason made known his request to King Aeetes. The king refused to relinquish the Golden Fleece unless Jason performed two impossible tasks, the yoking of fire-breathing bulls and the sowing of a dragon's teeth. The latter request was the most dangerous, as it was well-known that a host of armed men would spring up from the dragon's teeth and annihilate the sower.

Jason was undaunted, however. From the moment that he landed on the shores of Colchis, he had attracted the attention of Aeetes' beautiful young daughter, Medea. Medea had never seen a more daring or handsome young man and became passionately enamored of him. Jason was not unaware of this attraction and made use of it. He promised to marry Medea if she helped him survive and successfully complete the tasks imposed by her father. Medea was descended from the Sun and invested with magic powers. Her love for Jason overcame paternal allegiance, and she agreed to protect Jason with her sorcery.

Jason was not only successful in yoking the fire-breathing bulls, but he also survived the second task unharmed and victorious. The crop of armed men which materialized after the sowing of the dragon's teeth did not attack Jason, but because of Medea's charm turned upon and devoured one another. "The Greeks embraced their hero, and Medea,

if she dared, would have embraced him too."[1]

Aeetes, however, had no intention of allowing the Golden Fleece to leave his country. He planned to attack the Argonauts at night and destroy their ship. Medea learned of her father's conspiracy and again went to the aid of Jason. She led him to the grove in which the Fleece had been hung, and there, ever vigilant, was the fierce dragon. Medea made use of her magic charms and the dragon "shut those great round eyes, that had never been known to shut before, and turned over on his side, fast asleep."[2]

Jason, now in possession of the valuable prize, gathered his men together, boarded the Argo, and with Medea by his side set out to sea. Absyrtus, Medea's brother, accompanied the Argonauts and was to play a grim part in their escape. Aeetes pursued the foreigners from Colchis, and his fleet of smaller ships gained on them. Medea, who had already betrayed her father and her country, now helped the man she loved perpetrate another crime. They killed the young lad Absyrtus and strewed his limbs in the wake of their ship. Aeetes came upon this gruesome sight and slowed down in horror to retrieve the remains of his son from the sea. This delay enabled the Argonauts to pull away from the Colchians and they sailed away to Greece.

Jason and Medea lived in Thessaly for a few years, and

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1. Thomas Bulfinch, The Age of Fable, Chapter XI, p. 161.
2. Ibid.

two sons were born of their union. Pelias, however, would not give up the throne to his nephew. Medea's sorcery soon made it possible to avenge this tyranny, but whether Jason was aware of her plan or not is a matter of conjecture. Medea at one time had injected a specially prepared brew into the veins of Jason's father, making him forty years younger. Pelias' two daughters were greatly impressed by this miracle and begged Medea to do the same for their father. Their request gave Medea the very chance she was looking for, and unwittingly the daughters of Pelias brought about his death.

The same operation was performed on Pelias as had been performed on Aeson,his daughters stealing into his chamber at night and bleeding him while he slept. But Medea's brew was merely a juice made out of simple herbs and water and contained no youth-restoring medication. Pelias awoke, and died a horrible, screaming death.

Jason and Medea fled to Corinth with their two children and were given refuge by the king (named Creon), whom Jason had known in his boyhood. They lived there happily for several years, but Jason soon grew tired of his barbarian wife; her reputation for sorcery and mysterious deeds made it impossible for them to be accepted by the Corinthians. Creon had a beautiful young daughter named Creusa, and Jason was not oblivious to the advantages of marriage to a princess. Creon encouraged him in his courtship, and abandoning Medea, Jason married the king's daughter.

Medea was enraged at her lover's faithlessness, and her savage nature cried out for vengeance. Her passion for Jason had never subsided, and her fierce pride would brook no rival. She conceived another heinous crime. A poisoned robe was sent to Creusa as a wedding gift, and as soon as the young bride attired herself in the beautiful garment, flames darted out and enveloped her body. Creon rushed to her aid and both father and daughter were consumed by the flames.

Medea's revenge was not complete, however, to add to Jason's misery, she killed their two children and escaped from Corinth on a winged chariot drawn by dragons. She left behind a crushed and broken man. Years later Jason was killed, as he lay sleeping under the hull of his beloved ship the Argo, by a plank that broke loose and fell on his head.

Medea fled to Athens where she married King Aegeus, and the years that followed were as full of murder and sorcery as her years with Jason. It is belived that she eventually returned to her native country, Colchis, and died there. Her fame lived on, however, and the stories that were told about her savage crimes and her magic grew into the popular myth and legend that I have related.

II. EURIPIDES

1. His Life and Age; Greek Drama

Euripides was born in an age of extraordinary intellectual activity, and spent his early youth in an atmosphere of literary and political enlightenment. He was born in approximately 484 B.C. in a small village in Attica, the son of a well-to-do Athenian family. He received a good education, was somewhat of an athlete, and as a young boy showed an interest in painting, poetry, and philosophy. Athens at that time was the center of a flourishing Greek culture, and although at war with the Persians whom she defeated, had not yet begun to feel the detrimental effects of imperialism.

Euripides began to write tragedies when he was eighteen years of age, but it was not until 455 B.C. that he participated in the competitions held at the annual religious festivals.[1] All drama at that time was part of the worship devoted to Dionysus, the god of wine and vegetation. Performances were held at two festivals, the Lenae in mid-winter and the great or City Dionysia in the early spring months. These performances took the form of competitions. The archon or magistrate selected three poets for the festival, and on each

1. Arthur E. Haigh, The Tragic Drama of the Greeks, Chapt. IV, p. 207.

day one dramatist would present three tragedies and a satyr play. At the end of the festival a body of five judges awarded a first, second, and third prize.

Euripides' first play for which he "obtained a chorus" (an expression referring to the patronage and financial backing of rich citizens) was called Daughters of Pelias.[1] He received only third place and in later years was not much more successful in the contests. He obtained only five victories in all the years that he wrote for the festivals.[2] Daughters of Pelias was a tragedy concerning the adventures of Medea and Jason which preceded the action of Medea, and showed Euripides' early interest in the passions of this suffering and savage woman.

Medea was produced in 431 B.C. during the first year of the Peloponnesian war. Euripides was in military service at the time and fought in the war with patriotic fervor. He supported the policy of Pericles, Athen's great statesman, wholeheartedly, and his zeal is reflected not only in Medea but more particularly in a group of patriotic plays that followed.

Euripides' ardor soon subsided, however, with the rise of Cleon, a brutal, grasping despot. Ruthless imperialism replaced sincere patriotism, and there was an increasing degradation and embitterment in Greek public life. The old

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1. Gilbert Murray, Euripides and His Age, Chapt. I, pp. 68-69.
2. A. E. Haigh, op. cit., p. 209.

dreams and ideals were pushed aside by the new tide of aggression, culminating in 416 B.C. in the massacre of Melos. Euripides' later plays reflect his horror and bitterness, and he was saved from banishment only because his views were expressed in the dramatic verse of his characters and camouflaged by being cast in a conventional mold.[1]

Euripides lived to be seventy-eight years old, dying in the winter of 407-406 B. C. He had gone to Macedonia shortly before his death to visit the court upon the invitation of the King. His death gave rise to dramatic stories concerning his end. Some said that he was torn to pieces by the royal hounds let loose on purpose to destroy him. Other accounts insisted that he was beaten to death by women who objected to his plays and philosophy. But we now assume that he merely died of old age and natural decay.[2]

Euripides, during his lifetime, studied under and absorbed the philosophy of the Sophists. He was a disciple of Anaxogoras and associated with the younger Socrates. Their doctrines imbued him with a passionate love of rational truth[3] and a resolute rejection of all philosophy that did not directly concern the doings and feelings of men.[4]

Euripides was an aloof and austere man, a solitary figure with a few close intimates. He was studious and retiring and lived mostly in a world of books. He was married twice, and

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1. John Gassner, Masters of the Drama, Chapt. IV, p. 59.
2. A. E. Haigh, Op. cit., pp. 215-216.
3. John Gassner op. cit., p. 59.
4. Gilbert Murray, op. cit., p. 57.

a tradition has grown up that both wives were unfaithful, their infidelity resulting in his "bitterness" against women.[1]

His attitude toward women was deduced primarily from his tragedy Medea, which to the Greeks seemed a scurrilous and unwarranted attack on the integrity of womankind. To us he seems an aggressive champion of women, and during the suffragist movement of the nineteenth and twentieth century songs and speeches from Medea were recited exuberantly.[2]

Nevertheless, this play must have staggered its Greek audience. To state the cause of a barbarian woman against a Greek hero who had wronged her was shocking, to say the least. Aristophanes led the attack on Euripides and his dramatic material. He was accused of impairing the ideal beauty of Greek tragedy by his realistic representation of the heroic legends; he was held in contempt for treating love and sexual passion, which according to Aristophanes was an unfit subject for tragedy.

Euripides belonged to a new generation and reaped the criticism of his contemporaries because he was ahead of his times. He reflects the feelings of a later and more changeful epoch in which the old and exclusively Hellenic patterns were giving way to wider and more cosmopolitan views of life.[3]

After his death he became the most popular of the Greek tragic poets, but in more modern times opinion once more turned against him until the late nineteenth century.[4]

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1. A. E. Haigh, op. cit., p. 210.
2. Gilbert Murray, op. cit., p. 32.
3. A. E. Haigh, op. cit., p. 217.
4. Ibid., p. 226.

His influence upon European literature, however, has been far more extensive than that of Aeschylus and Sophocles, his tragedies being a forerunner to the modern, realistic and psychological drama. Euripides is capable still of thrilling an audience with his intensity of tragic emotion, and with his profound sympathy and tenderness toward human nature.

2. Medea, A Tragedy

We can assume that Medea was first produced in a huge, outdoor amphitheatre, and was witnessed by spectators who looked down from a gently sloping rise surrounding the platform stage. Masks and mouthpieces were worn by the actors, so that those who sat in the upper tiers could more easily recognize the characters being represented and hear the dialogue.

The audience was predominantly male, as the presence of Greek women (and children) at public performances was discouraged. Husbands, brothers, and sons probably stretched a bit as they waited for the dramatic offering to begin and talked to their neighbors of the war and politics. The women were safe at home, as was proper, busy with domestic duties and the children. An Athenian woman did not complain of her subservient position. She did not expect or desire to participate in activities outside the home. Her duty was to her husband, and the acquisition of higher learning or knowledge or politics was not encouraged as it is today.

This male audience expected a sympathetic portrayal of women in the drama, but a heroine to be truly tragic must first of all be Greek and so noble and free from fault as to be almost without character. They were totally unprepared for Euripides' treatment of the wicked, barbaric sorceress of Greek legend. And so the action of Medea began.

Greek drama is not divided into acts or scenes although intervals of action usually fall into five divisions. These five dividions contain a prologue, the entrance of the chorus (parados), passages of dialogue (epeisodions) followed by choral odes (stasimons), and sometimes an exodos, or chorus recessional.

The prologue of Medea is a masterpiece of concise exposition in which the background of the story is given quickly and naturally. We are told of the Argonaut expedition and of the events that followed up to the arrival of Jason and Medea in Corinth. Medea's nurse tells the story, and we learn that a dark shadow now hangs over her mistress. Jason has left the bed of Medea and has taken the Princess of Corinth for his bride, with the blessing of her father, the King.

As the old nurse laments this new misfortune she describes the effect which Jason's faithlessness has had upon Medea:

> All fasting now
> And cold, her body yielded up to pain,
> Her days a waste of weeping, she hath lain,
> Since first she knew that he was false.[1]

A few lines later the nurse voices her fear of what the future will bring, and this tragic foreboding arouses our immediate interest and curiosity:

> Methinks she hath a dread, not joy, to see
> Her children near. 'Tis this that maketh me
> Most tremble, lest she do I know not what.
> Her heart is no light thing, and useth not

1. Gilbert Murray, Fifteen Greek Plays, his translation of Medea, p. 450.

To brook much wrong.[1]

The nurse's soliloquy is interrupted by the entrance of an attendant with the two children of Jason and Medea. The attendant hints at more bad news to come and finally relates his information to the apprehensive nurse. His hesitation to speak is an effective device for building up a mood of suspense, so important in Euripides' tragedy. What the old man has heard is that Creon, the king of Corinth, has decreed immediate banishment for Medea and her sons. The nurse cannot believe that Jason will be so wicked as to permit his own flesh and blood to be sent away, but the old man has a more cynical and worldly attitude:

> And what man on earth is different? How?
> Hast thou lived all these years, and learned but now
> That every man more loveth his own head
> Than other men's? He dreameth of the bed
> Of this new bride, and thinks not of his sons.[2]

The attendant leads the children inside, and as they go in Medea's wailing is suddenly heard offstage. The nurse is frightened by the sound, and as the chorus begins to file in she makes a poetic comment on the temperament of her mistress:

> Methinks this weeping cloud
> Hath in its heart some thunder-fire,
>
> Slow gathering, that must flash ere long.
> I know not how, for ill or well,
> It turns, this uncontrollable
> Tempestuous spirit, blind with wrong.[3]

The mournful voice of Medea is heard from time to time during the nurse's passages and those of the chorus which

1. Gilbert Murray, Fifteen Greek Plays, his translation of Medea, p. 450.
2. Gilbert Murray op. cit., Medea, p. 451.
3. Ibid., p. 452.

follow. The chorus, made up of Corinthian women, discusses Medea's plight with the nurse and makes sorrowful comments. They are grieved by Medea's spoken desire for death and ask the nurse to seek Medea so that she can be comforted. As the nurse complies with their bidding the chorus maneuvers about the stage and chants, in accompaniment to the strophe and antistrophe movements, the following lyrical verses:

> Alas, the bold blithe bards of old
> That all for joy their music made,
> For feasts and dancing manifold,
> That life might listen and be glad.
>
> But all the darkness and the wrong,
> Quick deaths and dim heart-aching things,
> Would no man ease them with a song
> Or music of a thousand strings?
>
> Then song had served us in our need.
> What profit, o'er the banquet's swell
> That lingering cry that none may heed?
> The feast hath filled them: all is well! [1]

During the last refrain Medea has come out of the house, and her entrance is dramatic and exciting. Even before her first appearance a definite characterization has been built up by the descriptive phrases of the nurse, and the whole mood is one of sympathy and sorrow for the heroine. One can imagine that the masculine minds of the Greek audience are seething with curiosity and beginning to entertain rather suspicious thoughts of the performance.

Medea's first words are an apology for giving in to grief; she fears that her lack of restraint will be criticized even more strongly because she is a stranger to Greek shores.

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1. Gilbert Murray, op. cit., Medea, pp. 455-456.

Her excuse is:

> But I--
> This thing undreamed of, sudden from on high,
> Hath sapped my soul: I dazzle where I stand,
> The cup of all life shattered in my hand,
> Longing to die.[1]

The rest of this long, powerful passage is a bitter discourse on the hard lot of women and the faithlessness of men. The case which Medea presents is a strong, penetrative analysis of the fundamental conflict between man and woman. Her resentment at being pushed aside by Jason for a younger, more beautiful woman finds impassioned expression in stinging, biting words. Her comment on the sheltered life of women as compared to the rigors of a man's world is given in these sarcastic lines:

> And then forsooth 'tis they that face the call
> Of war, while we sit sheltered, hid from all
> Peril!- False mocking! Sooner would I stand
> Three times to face their battles, shield in hand,
> Than bear one child.[2]

Medea ends her long discourse with a reference to her friendless position in a strange country, and her last words lash out again in a stormy reminder that a woman scorned is not one to be treated lightly.

Creon, the ruler of Corinth, enters at this moment and bluntly commands the immediate exile of Medea. He has heard of Medea's threats against his daughter and is determined to be rid of this far-eastern sorceress at once. Medea denies that she intends harm and throws herself on the mercy of Creon

1. Gilbert Murray, op. cit., Medea, pp. 456.
2. Gilbert Murray, op. cit., Medea, p. 457.

in a magnificent performance which is deliberately pathetic and full of womanly guile. Creon gives in to her arguments against his better judgment and allows her one day of grace before she must leave with her children.

After Creon leaves with his train of attendants Medea gives vent to her real feeling in a savage, comtemptuous outburst. For the first time she states her intent to kill Jason, Creon, and the young bride. She is haunted by the fear of laughter and derision from her enemies:

> For all their strength, they shall not stab my soul
> And laugh thereafter.[1]

Medea decides that poison is her best weapon, "where we too are strong as men,"[2] but before she acts she must first secure a refuge. She calls on Hecate, the underworld goddess, for help, recalling with pride her descent from the Sun.

The first stasimon of the chorus that follows is a mournful observation on the sadness of life, Medea's lost home, and her bleak future. Although not a cheerful passage, the quiet tone gives needed relief from the terrific emotion of preceding lines. The action again picks up as Jason strides into view.

Jason begins without any preliminary to accuse Medea of bringing trouble upon herself by her refusal to give in to those in power. Despite her pugnacious audacity, he claims

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1. Gilbert Murray, op. cit., Medea, p. 462.
2. Gilbert Murray, op. cit., Medea, p. 461.

magnanimously, his only desire is to help her. His condescending words infuriate Medea and send her off on another tirade.

She reminds Jason of his debt to her for winning the golden fleece and of her many deeds in his behalf, including murder. His gratitude has been to take another wife, which one could forgive perhaps if she had not also borne him children. With strong feeling she says:

> Poor, poor right hand of mine, whom he
> Did cling to, and these knees so cravingly,
> We are unclean, thou and I; we have caught the stain
> Of bad men's flesh--and dreamed our dreams in vain.[1]

Jason's rebuttal glosses over his debt to Medea, which he admits grudgingly, and emphasizes what he has done for her. Unctuously and pompously he reminds Medea that he took her from a barbaric, uncivilized home and brought her to a land of culture and justice. Medea's magic powers have become world famous through her association with his name:

> Had thy days run by unseen
> On that last edge of the world, where then had been
> The story of great Medea?[2]

Jason insists that his marriage to Creusa (whose name is never used in the play) is merely one of convenience and is for the sole purpose of providing security for Medea and the children. Between the lines we are led to suspect that Jason desires an easy life primarily for himself:

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1. Gilbert Murray, op. cit., Medea, p. 465.
2. Ibid., p. 466.

> And for me, it serves my star
> To link in strength the children that now are
> With those that shall be.[1]

He concludes his defense with a bitter volley aimed at women, whom he accuses of demon-like behavior once the course of love does not run smooth. He adds:

> Would to God
> We mortals by some other seed could raise
> Our fruits, and no blind women block our ways!
> Then had there been no curse to wreck mankind.[2]

The chorus leader rebukes Jason for his ill treatment of Medea, and Medea resumes her own potent offense. Jason insists stubbornly that his recent marriage is not for his benefit and offers again to help Medea. She scorns his proffered aid, and as he leaves throws out a jealous taunt and threat.

The second stasimon is a beautiful choral song concerning the good and evil of love, during which Medea sits alone, downcast and dejected. The following episode, in which Aegeus appears and promises to shelter Medea in his kingdom, has been sharply criticized from the time of Aristotle as being unmotivated and abrupt.[3] This scene is artificial and mechanical compared to others, but it is necessary in order to give Medea a haven to which to flee. She promises Aegeus, who is king of Athens, that he will not be childless, and that his frustrated desire for offspring will finally be fulfilled through her magic powers. As with Creon, she pretends help-

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1. Gilbert Murray, op. cit., Medea, p. 467.
2. Ibid.
3. P. W. Harsh, op. cit., p. 175.

lessness and stresses her femininity. Aegeus, an old friend of Medea's, is readily sympathetic to her plight and vows that he will protect her in Athens against all enemies.

Medea's wish for a refuge has been miraculously answered, and she is now ready to proceed with her plot against Jason. She bursts forth with an exuberant, exultant speech and unfolds her diabolical plan to the Corinthian women present. Her children will bear a beautiful robe and crown to the princess for a wedding gift, and upon wearing them her flesh will be devoured by fire. And all who touch the bride in her agony will be consumed likewise. Jason's punishment will be bereavement and loneliness, the loneliness of a father as well as a husband for Medea plans to slay her own children.

Medea is the inhuman savage of legend in this passage, an evil enchantress who glories in her murderous intent. But even here Euripides justifies her frame of mind and injects a sympathetic note when he again refers to Medea's fear of laughter and her resentment at being snubbed by Greek society. The leader of the chorus is horrified by Medea's passionate avowal that she must kill her children and pleads with her not to go through with it. Medea ignores his advice and sends for Jason, whom she intends to pacify in order to throw him off his guard.

Euripides has now attained a maximum of suspense for his Greek audience, whose members are thoroughly familiar with the plot of this old myth but keenly interested in how the

story will unfold. Male resentment at Medea's heretical talk may have subsided somewhat in the excitement of the moment.

As a contrast to the heaviness and horror of Medea's preceding speech, the chorus here indulges in one of its most beautiful, poetic odes, this time in praise of Athens. An example of the lyrical, delicate quality is this selection:

> And Cephisus, the fair-flowing river--
> The Cyprian dipping her hand
> Hath drawn of his dew, and the shiver
> Of her touch is as joy in the land.
> For her breathing in fragrance is written,
> And in music her path as she goes,
> And the cloud of her hair, it is litten
> With stars of the wind-woven rose.[1]

Jason's second entrance brings the audience back to stage reality, and Medea resorts to flattery and pretended humility to allay his anger. She calls her children and bursts into tears as they go to Jason. The irony of her words is almost too painful:

> Shall it be
> A long time more, my children, that ye live
> To reach to me those dear, dear arms?[2]

Jason seems amazingly stupid in his acceptance of Medea's feigned remorse, and for a man who has lived with a woman for over ten years he shows little knowledge of her nature. He falls into her trap easily and agrees to allow the children to plead to Creusa for permission to remain in Corinth--with the understanding that Medea's banishment will take place as formerly decreed. Jason departs with his sons, who bear the poisoned robe and crown. The chorus of women realizes that

1. Gilbert Murray, op. cit., Medea, p. 476.
2. Ibid., p. 478.

the children are doomed to death now that Medea has sealed the fate of the princess. They are utterly dejected and for the first time express pity for Jason; but as many critics have pointed out, they do nothing constructive to avert the tragedy. Their solution is merely one of passive acquiescence and sorrow for the futility and barreness of life.

The two children return with the attendant from their ill-starred mission, and Medea becomes frightened momentarily. She feels not only fear but also remorse, realizing the dire implications of her deed. At the sight of her children courage fails her, and she cannot go through with her previous plan to kill them. In this scene she is very much a mother, possessive and protective in her love for the two boys. She exclaims to the chorus:

> Women, my strength is gone,
> Gone like a dream, since once I looked upon
> Those shining faces--I can do it not.[1]

But suddenly she is struck with her old fear of the laughter of enemies:

> And yet,
> What is it with me? Would I be a thing
> Mocked at, and leave mine enemies to sting
> Unsmitten? It must be. O coward hear,
> Ever to harbor such soft words!--Depart
> Out of my sight, ye twain.[2]

After they leave she continues to struggle with her conscience, and when the children return she folds them into her arms. She cries out incoherently, and Euripides here slips

1. Gilbert Murray, op. cit., Medea, p. 482.
2. Ibid., p. 483.

into melodrama instead of sustaining real pathos.

The stasimon that follows is a brooding, melancholy dissertation on the cares of motherhood, ending with:

> And lo, where Fortune smiled,
> Some change, and what hath fallen? Hark!
> 'Tis death slow winging to the dark,
> And in his arms what was they child.
> What therefore doth it bring of gain
> To man, whose cup stood full before,
> That God should send this one thing more
> Of hunger and of dread, a door
> Set wide to every wind of pain.[1]

The climax of Medea comes in the next episode. A messenger enters, wildly perturbed by the tidings that he bears. Medea hungers for details of Creusa's death, and her bloodthirsty curiosity appalls the messenger. But he complies with her request, and in the longest single passage of the play gives a horrible, graphic picture of the death of Creusa and her father. His description is full of action, painfully vivid and pathetic.

Creusa does not appear on the stage, but for the first time her personality is felt. Jealous of Medea and resentment against the children gives way to childish delight as she is shown the flowered raiment and golden crown. In mounting horror the messenger narrates the culmination of the tragedy ending in the ghastly death of both the princess and her father. This passage does not make for pleasant reading, but the power and imagery can be felt in such lines as:

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1. Gilbert Murray, op. cit., Medea, p. 485.

Till through her lips was seen
A white foam crawling, and her eyeballs back
Twisted, and all her face dead pale for lack
Of life:

The carcanet of gold
That gripped her brow was molten in a dire
And wondrous river of devouring fire.
And those fine robes, the gift thy children gave--
God's mercy!--everywhere did lap and lave
The delicate flesh; till up she sprang, and fled,
A fiery pillar, shaking locks and head
This way and that, seeking to cast the crown
Somewhere away.[1]

Euripides' description is a masterpiece of grim irony and action-packed drama. It is typical of Greek tragedy in that a messenger relates an action that has taken place off-stage. This device was necessary since bbodshed could not take place right before the audience. The messengers' description in Medea is one of the most powerful and imaginative in all Greek drama.

Another tense moment follows when Medea is at last confronted with the task of killing her children. She realizes that her crime has already endangered the lives of the two boys, and rather than have them die at the hands of enemies she must kill them herself. We may not approve of this reasoning, remembering the original revenge motive, but at least there is some justification made for her decision.

Medea goes into the house, probably with drawn sword, as the chorus cries out in consternation. The cries of the

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1. Gilbert Murray, op. cit., Medea, pp. 486-487.

children are heard within, and at the moment of death they seem more alive than at any previous time in the play. Up till now they have been mute, making entrances and exits in puppet-like fashion.

The Corinthian women, in the meantime, beat upon the doors of Medea's house in helpless anger. In the midst of this noise and confusion Jason enters with a train of attendants. His inner stature is more impressive in this scene because of the concern and affection he shows for his children. His spirit is completely shattered when he learns of Medea's dastardly revenge. Almost out of his mind with grief and anger he cries out to his men to break down the doors and seize the murderess.

But he is too late. A dramatic use is here made of the "deus ex machina" device as Medea appears aloft standing in a chariot of winged dragons. We are reminded of her magic powers as she says triumphantly:

> Out of his firmament
> My fathers' father, the high Sun, hath sent
> This, that shall save me from mine enemies' rage.[1]

Jason's intense feeling finally breaks loose as he unleashes bitter epithets and accusations at the mother of his dead children. His fury is justified, but even in our sympathy for him we cannot fail to notice his one-sided argument. He places all the blame for the catastrophe at Medea's feet, blindly ignoring his part in the tragedy. At this point,

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1. Gilbert Murray, op. cit., Medea, p. 491.

however, his emotions cloud the issue and make cold logic impossible.

Medea remains calm and adamant throughout Jason's speech, answering him with these tearing words:

> Call me what thing thou please,
> Tigress or Skylla from the Tuscan seas:
> My claws have gripped thine hearth, and all things shine.[1]

The verbal sparring of Jason and Medea is ironic and pathetic. Their children are dead; as each tries to hurt the other it is evident that the grief of both is boundless and overwhelming. Jason suffers more intensely for he is not allowed to bury his children or even touch them again. Medea rises on the chariot and is borne slowly away. Jason calls out to the Gods to witness her treachery, and in hopeless anger and despair throws himself upon the ground.

The Corinthian women have been silent during this last dramatic scene but bring Euripides' tragedy to a close with the moral:

> Great treasure halls hath Zeus in heaven,
> From whence to man strange dooms be given,
> Past hope or fear.
> And the end men looked for cometh not,
> And a path is there where no man thought;
> So hath it fallen here.[2]

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1. Gilbert Murray, op. cit., Medea, p. 492.
2. Ibid., p. 494.

3. Criticism and Comment

Euripides' characterization of Medea is a monumental tribute to his powers of perception and understanding of the human soul. Her figure is the dominant force in the play; powerful, majestic, the depth of her portrayal overshadows all other features.

Euripides unveils the heart and soul of his tragic heroine with great dramatic skill. Before she actually appears on the stage he carefully builds up a clear picture of her appearance and state of mind. The nurse says of her:

> That fell sea-spirit, and the dire
> Spring of a will untaught, unbowed.[1]

After Medea's appearance our conception of her enlarges through her own comments and remarks of the other characters. Creon greets her with these words:

> Thou woman sullen-eyed and hot with hate.[2]

Medea says of herself:

> Thine old barbarian bride,
> The Queen out of the east who loved thee sore,
> She grew gray-haired, she served thy pride no more.[3]

These excellent bits of characterization establish a sympathetic cord between Medea and the audience--although one cannot assume such a reaction from Euripides' large male audience. Euripides builds up a strong case for the Colchian sorceress whose verbal bouts with her enemies have a certain

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1. Gilbert Murray, op. cit., Medea, p. 452.
2. Ibid., p. 458.
3. Ibid., p. 468.

legal, courtroom atmosphere about them.

Medea's passionate love for Jason is her greatest defense and the underlying cause of a whole career of crime. From the moment that she set eyes on the daring seeker of the golden fleece her passionate nature became a slave to his every wish. This love shaped her whole life; it was the one thing that could master her reason and will.

We must also remember Medea's background before she met Jason. She was reared in a foreign country, barbaric according to Greek standards. But Medea was a princess, descended from the Sun, and pride in her lineage was of great importance to her. She inherited magic powers from her ancestors and grew up into a proud, strong-willed, unbridled young woman.

Her wild nature had not softened by the time she fled to Corinth with Jason and the children. She left behind a trail of murder and blood, her infamy being well known to the Greeks. Corinthian society accepted Jason without question and to a lesser degree his foreign wife. But she was sensitive to the condescension of society and conscious of the difference in customs. The role of an inferior barbarian was a hard one for Medea to bear, and constant resentment smoldered in her heart. Jason's decision to align himself with the royal family in marriage touched off the explosion.

Medea's method of avenging her own injured pride seems barbaric and cruel. To Medea, however, the infliction of pain upon one's enemies was right and natural. Her stubborn,

untamed spirit was not conditioned to accept defeat; her burning love for Jason turned to hate when she was deprived of something for which she had given up home and family, endured hardships, and committed murder.

Euripides emphasizes Medea's deep affection for her children and in this light it is hard to accept their slaughter. It is made less horrible in our eyes, however, since Euripides does not attempt to build up any characterization of the children. Medea's deep-rooted obsession, her fear of being made an object of laughter, is another extenuating factor.

Even though we condemn her actions, we cannot fail to acknowledge the mastery of Euripides in so completely humanizing this startling figure of Greek mythology. As Gilbert Murray says, "Civilized men have loved and deserted savage women since the world began, and I doubt if ever the deserted one has found such words of fire as Medea speaks.---------- Medea is not only barbarian but a woman, and fights the war that lies, an eternally latent possibility, between woman and man."[1]

Jason's mind is not as complex as Medea's nor as interesting psychologically. His character is important primarily as a contrast to that of Medea. His role is that of an antagonist, and as such we become acquainted with him.

As he argues with Medea we discover that he is selfish and self-centered. Throughout his years of association with

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1. Gilbert Murray, Euripides and His Age, p. 84.

her he has accepted the fruits of her wizardy, closing his mind to her methods. Being an opportunist he takes for granted the good fortune that is directed his way. But adversity finds him a weak opponent, and he deserts Medea as soon as he can hitch his star to a wagon that leads to wealth and security. His excuse for marrying the King's beautiful young daughter is:

> That we all might dwell
> In a fair house and want not, knowing well
> That poor men have no friends, but far and near
> Shunning and silence.[1]

Jason has convinced himself that his intentions are honorable, but to anyone else his self-interest in the issue is the motivating factor. We are irritated, as is Medea, by his assumption that Medea has bettered her position in life by linking her fortune with his and by leaving her Colchian shores. He very conveniently ignores his debt to Medea and the debt of all the Argonauts whose lives she saved. He says with pomposity:

> Howbeit, in my deliverance, thou hast got
> Far more than given. A good Greek land hath been
> Thy lasting home, not barbary. Thou hast seen
> Our ordered life, and justice, and the long
> Still grasp of law not changing with the strong
> Man's pleasure.[2]

Jason, despite his many years of intimacy with Medea, is amazingly insensitive to her jealous, possessive nature. His knowledge of her never penetrates beyond surface re-

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1. Gilbert Murray, op. cit., Medea, p. 467.
2. Gilbert Murray, op. cit., Medea, p. 466.

The chorus is an integrated part of the story and indispensable in interpreting action. From the beginning the Corinthian women are wholly in sympathy with Medea, and their attitude is a clue to probable audience reaction. The choral songs are short, always fitting in with the mood of the play but at the same time offering contrast to the grimness of the theme. Their beautiful, musical quality and moving outbursts of poetry and passion, have given Euripides the reputation of being the most lyrical of the Greek tragedians.

I have never seen Medea acted on the stage, but I believe that a modern audience would be thrilled by a good production. Catholic University included Sophocles' Electra in their repertoire of 1945-1946, and this excellent production was enthusiastically received by the audience of which I was a member. Euripides' Medea, a masterpiece of suspense, surprise and dramatic irony, would certainly appeal to intelligent, present-day theatre goers. Some day I hope to see it performed by a small, experimental company.

The reaction of the Greek audience in 431 B.C., however, was probably not very flattering to the dramatist who could do no better than win third prize. The play might have irritated a Greek audience in two ways. Euripides did not label his characters good or bad but gave both sides. Furthermore, "he made a point of studying closely and sympathetically many regions of thought and character which the plain man preferred not to think of at all."[1]

1. Gilbert Murray, Euripides and His Age, p. 85.

Because of Medea and other controversial plays, Euripides was both admired and hated and moved always through the midst of half envious, half-derisive laughter. Medea survived the criticism of Euripides' age, however, and lived on to influence every great period of drama that followed.

III SENECA

1. His Life and Age; Roman Drama

The leap from Greek tragedy to the time of Seneca is one of almost five hundred eventful years. The center of the world had become Rome, but Athen's cultural influence was felt strongly in the new Empire across the Adriatic.

Livius Andronicus, a Greek himself, was responsible for the eventual mold of the Roman drama. In 240 B.C. he brought out a comedy and tragedy written in Latin but modeled after the Greek plays he knew so well. Up until this time crude attempts to present dramatic performances of a Roman type had grown out of the worship of rustic divinities[1] similar to the Greek celebrations in honor of Dionysus. But these native products could not get a very firm footing, and the vastly superior Greek drama became the model for subsequent Roman writers.

The comedies of the Roman era appealed to the popular taste far more than did the tragedies. The theatre was not considered a respectable institution as it had been in Athens, and actors were for the most part slaves. The people who witnessed the plays craved amusement and rowdy humor, and

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1. Joseph R. Taylor, The Story of the Drama, Chapt. XVIII, p. 193

the popularity of comedy far surpassed that of tragedy. Seneca's plays are the only tragedies of this period that have come down to us, and it seems probable that during his own time they were written only for declamation, not actual stage production.[1]

The age into which Seneca was born was robust, swelled with military victories and the success of world dominion. It saw the advent of Christianity, but the teachings of Jesus Christ had no more effect than a small pebble thrown into the ocean. It was a noisy, fast-moving age, complacent and not aware of the decay that would eventually lead to its destruction.

Lucius Annaeus Seneca was born in Spain at about the same time the Christ child was being worshipped in Bethlehem. He was brought to Rome at an early age and received a liberal education. His formative years were greatly influenced by the philosophy of stoicism which stamped itself firmly in the mind of the young student.[2]

He entered public life but soon came into disfavor with the Emperor Claudius. He was exiled to Corsica, and it was there that he probably wrote Medea.[3] In 49 A.D. Claudius, then a widower, married Agrippina who persuaded him to recall Seneca to the court so that he might tutor her son Nero. Agrippina was an ambitious, scheming woman, and after Claudius'

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1. P. W. Harsh, op. cit., Chapt. XII, p. 405.
2. Hugh M. Kingery, Three Tragedies of Seneca, Intro., p. 11.
3. Ibid., p. 12.

death she maneuvered her son into the Emperor's seat.

Nero benefited by the instruction of his tutor, and the first five years of his reign were comparatively just and well ordered. Agrippina was a constant source of friction, however, and opposed Seneca and Nero's other wise, political advisers. A reign of bloodshed succeeded the years of peace, and Agrippina's execution by Nero was the climax of other murderous acts by the rapidly deteriorating Emperor.

Seneca found his position increasingly difficult, and in 62 A.D. received permission to go into exile. He returned to Corsica and three years later was accused of complicity in a plot against Nero's life. In obedience to the Imperial command, Seneca committed suicide and escaped from the harsh realities of a vicious and despotic reign.

It is no wonder that Seneca's tragedies are so full of bloodshed and deeds of atrocity. And although he borrowed freely from Euripides in many of his plays, including the Medea, the quality and flavor of his tragedies are distinctly his own. We remember him especially for his ghosts, scenes of horror and violent passion, philosophic monologues, and flamboyant rhetoric.[1]

Seneca has been accused of moral lassitude both as a man and as an author because of his relations with Nero.[2] Charges of insincerity, verbosity and inconsistency of philosophy have been levelled at him. His enemies say he resorted to

1. J. R. Taylor, op. cit., Chapt. XXI, p. 240.
2. H. M. Kingery, op. cit., p. 14.

flattery in dealings with Nero and contemptuously point to alleged pitiful pleas for recall while he was exiled during Claudius' reign.[1]

Regardless of criticism and accusations, Seneca's tragedies did more to influence the great age of Elizabethan drama than any other single literary force. And in our own time we have examples of Senecan technique in the field of radio, such as Archibald MacLeish's "Fall of the City" and "Air Raid."[2] The flaws of Seneca's tragedies are easily discernible, but one cannot deny him an auspicious place in world drama when his influence upon that drama has been so marked and lasting.

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1. J. R. Taylor, op. cit., p. 230.
2. John Gassner, op. cit., p. 76.

2. The Tragedy, Medea

It is very probable that Medea did not appear on the stage in Seneca's time. In form, however, it could have adapted itself to the conditions of the large, outdoor Roman theatre. The orchestral pit contained seats for the Senators which left no space for the choral dances that had been performed on the Greek stage.[1] The chorus of Medea, and of Seneca's other tragedies, took account of this peculiarity of the Roman theatre and was not meant to participate directly in the development of plot. It remained to one side and in a stationary position merely recited in a declamatory fashion.

Had Medea been staged, it would have pleased a typical Roman audience in many respects. They were a rowdy group on the whole, and demanded a crowded stage and tumultuous action.[2] Producers had to compete with gladiatorial combats held in the arena, and Medea would have at least gratified their taste for pomp, movement, and spectacle.

The five act structure with four divisional choral songs was the accepted form by the time of Seneca. There were three speaking parts, and the unities of time and place were normally respected.[3]

In Medea the time of action covers one day, conforming to the unity of time as did Euripides' play. The story begins on the day of Jason's marriage to Creusa with wedding

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1. H. M. Kingery, op. cit., p. 4.
2. J. R. Taylor, op. cit., p. 205.
3. P. W. Hersh, op. cit., p. 408.

festivities already in progress. The play opens with a prologue but one that is very different from Euripides' masterpiece of exposition. Medea speaks the prologue in a long speech in which she calls upon the Gods, ghosts and furies to bring disaster upon Jason and the royal family. Medea's words leave no doubt as to Seneca's interpretation of her character:

> My pregnant soul is teeming; and my heart is full
> Of pictured wounds and death and slaughter.--Ah, too long
> On trifling ills I dwell. These were my virgin deeds.
> Now that a mother's pains I've felt, my larger heart
> Must larger crimes conceive.[1]

The human realism of Euripides is lacking; Medea is presented as an avenging murderess in her first speech, one who revels in the carnage made possible by her magic arts. She evokes not our sympathy, but our horror.

The chorus relects our feeling in their choral song at the end of this act. Their mood is one of rejoicing as they pay tribute to Jason and his bride, marred only by knowledge of Medea's baleful presence. The Corinthian women of Euripides' Medea wished to comfort the forsaken mother of Jason's children. In Seneca's tragedy they say:

> Now, O Jason, freed from the hateful wedlock
> That held thee bound to the barbarous Colchian woman,
> Joyfully wed the fair Corinthian maiden,
> While at last her parents' blessings attend thee.[2]

Act Two opens with a more restrained speech by Medea in which she expresses her unhappiness at being abandoned. She

1. Frank J. Miller, The Tragedies of Seneca, Medea, Act I,p.84.
2. Ibid., p. 85.

cries out against Jason:

> O impious one, what streams of blood have flowed to work
> Thy ends! And yet, not one of all my crimes by wrath
> Was prompted. Love, ill-omened love, suggested all.[1]

We do not find in Seneca the depth of the Greek tragedy, so evident in Medea's brilliant defense of womankind. But her reasoning is more sane here than in the preceding act. For a moment her thoughts of Jason are even charitable as she blames the will of Creon for Jason's infidelity. Creon must bear the brunt of her revenge; his palace will be brought to utter desolation.

Medea's nurse now speaks for the first time, cautioning her to keep her threats to herself. She is more blunt and outspoken than Euripides' nurse and gives good practical advice. She reminds Medea that she is without home or possessions and must respect Creon's power even while plotting against his life. Medea says:

> Yet I am left. There's left both sea and land and fire
> And sword and Gods and hurtling thunderbolts.[2]

When Creon enters he banishes Medea from his kingdom, his first words being more virulent than those of Euripides' King. In this scene Seneca presents a clash of wills. Creon calls Medea to task for her past deeds, and Medea replies by including Jason in all that she is accused of. She asks for a hearing before he sentences her to exile; Creon reminds

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1. Frank J. Miller, The Tragedies of Seneca, Medea, Act II, p. 86.
2. F. J. Miller, op. cit., Act II, p. 87.

her that she did not allow Pelias to speak before bleeding him to death. Medea does not become servile in order to appease Creon. Seneca differs from Euripides in that Medea's arguments are logical and unrelenting, instead of deliberately hypocritical. She pleads:

> For, though by present storms of ill I'm overwhelmed,
> An exile, suppliant, lone, forsaken, all forlorn,
> I once in happier times a royal princess shone,
> And traced my proud descent from heavenly Phoebus' self.
>
> ———————
>
> The only crime
> Of which I stand accused is this--the Argo saved.[1]

She reminds Creon that he knew of her crimes when she first came to Corinth, and all she asks is:

> Some little corner of thy kingdom now I ask,
> In which to hide my grief.[2]

Creon does not consider Jason guilty of Medea's crimes, as she implies, but gives in to her arguments somewhat by allowing her one day in which to settle her affairs. In Euripides' play the children are included in Creon's decree; but in Seneca Creon promises Medea that he will provide a home for the boys.

The dialogue in this scene has power and is comparable to the scene of Euripides in which Medea first confronts Jason. She here uses her best arguments on Creon, which accounts for the scene's dramatic effect.

The second choral interlude gives evidence of the Roman interest in world geography. It is a tribute to the advance

1. F. J. Miller, op. cit., Act II, pp. 89-90.
2. Ibid, p. 90.

of navigation which Seneca here ties in with the voyage of the Argonauts. Some passages are almost visionary, such as:

> The time will come, as lapsing ages flee,
> When every land shall yield its hidden treasure;
> When men no more shall unknown courses measure,
> For round the world no "farthest land" shall be.[1]

Medea rushes out seeking vengeance at the beginning of the third act, and her nurse voices a fear, a fear expressed much earlier in Euripides'. That fear is:

> Some deed
> Is threatening, wild, profane, and hideous.
> Behold
> Her face betrays her madness. O ye gods, may these
> Our fears prove vain forebodings![2]

Jason's entrance interrupts Medea's raging rhetoric, and dreading the encounter, he talks to himself to gain courage:

> For well I know that in my death my children's fate
> Is sealed. O sacred Justice, if in heaven thou
> dwell'st
> Be witness now, that for my children's sake I act.[3]

Jason's avowal that his marriage to Creusa is to save his children from royal disfavor is open to question but has at least some ring of sincerity. Equally sincere but not so admirable is his fear of Medea and her anger. He offers weak opposition to Medea's arguments and almost agrees with her as she says:

> For who by sin advantage gains,
> Commits the sin.[4]

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1. F. J. Miller, op. cit., Act II, p. 93.
2. Ibid, Act III, p. 94.
3. Ibid, p. 95.
4. F. J. Miller, op. cit., Act III, p. 97.

Jason's one excuse is the children's safety; but for them he would oppose Creon's power. Medea says she can summon as much power as Creon, but Jason does not share her confidence. When he again mentions the children she exclaims in an aside:

> Doth he thus love his sons? 'Tis well;
> Then he is bound, and in his armored strength this flaw
> Reveals the place to strike.[1]

With this thought she asks permission to see her sons once more. Jason gladly accedes to her request and leaves, relieved to have the interview at an end.

Medea flies into another rage and commands the nurse to fetch an ancestral robe and crown which she will infect with her magic arts. The poisoned robe will then be sent to Creusa as a wedding gift.

A long choral ode again separates the acts, this time calling upon the Gods to be merciful to Jason. The chorus is wholly sympathetic to his cause and fears that he too will meet a violent death as have so many other Argonauts.

In Act Four we are taken into Medea's evil laboratory where she concocts her poisonous brew. The nurse in a long soliloquy gives us a preview of Medea at work:

> These deadly potent herbs she takes and sprinkles o'er
> With serpent venom, mixing all; and in the broth
> She mingles unclean birds: a wailing screech owl's heart,
> A ghastly vampire's vitals torn from living flesh.[2]

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1. F. J. Miller, op. cit., Act III, p. 99.
2. Ibid., Act IV, p. 105.

Medea's incantations follow in which she shows no signs of being human. She is not a mere woman in this scene but a witch chanting over a bubbling cauldron. There is a quickened beat in the stanza form to accompany the increased frenzy of Medea. The climax of her incantations comes when she cuts her arm and allows the blood to flow in sacrifice to the goddess Hecate. Then she describes the death that will come to Creusa:

> Take now Creusa's bridal robe, and steep in these,
> My potent drugs; and when she dons the clinging folds,
> Let subtle flames go stealing through her inmost heart.
>
> ———————
>
> But through her veins let burning fever run;
> In fervent heat consume her very bones,
> And let her fiercely blazing locks outshine
> Her marriage torches![1]

Medea's sons now appear out of nowhere and carry off the poisoned gifts to the hapless Creusa. In Euripides' tragedy Medea resorts to planned strategy in order to entrap Creusa; Seneca over-simplifies the problem, having the children perform the errand without any warning whatever.

As Medea rushes off, the chorus gives us a good picture of her physical appearance:

> Where hastes this Bacchic fury now,
> All passion-swept? What evil deed
> Does her unbridled rage prepare?
> Her features are congealed with rage,
> And with a queenly bearing, grand
> But terrible, she sets herself
> Against e'en Creon's royal power,
> An exile who would deem her now?[2]

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1. F. J. Miller, op. cit., Act IV, p. 108.
2. Ibid., pp. 108-109.

In the last act a messenger rushes in to relate the flame devouring death of Creon and his daughter. But how different from Euripides' lengthy, vivid description! Since Medea has already described the scene, the messenger merely tells the bare facts.

Medea rejoices at the news and works herself into an ecstacy of madness. She recalls the slaying of her brother in order to find courage to murder her own sons. Just as she is about to carry out her revenge her better emotions come to the surface. As in Euripides' Medea, her conscience and her feeling of mother love obstruct her purpose. She cries out:

> My heart with horror melts, a numbing chill pervades
> My limbs, and all my soul is filled with sinking fear.
> Now wrath gives place, and, heedless of my husband's sins,
> The tender mother-instinct quite possesses me.[1]

Medea's decision to kill the children is formulated not because she fears laughter, but because she knows she must lose them anyway. She prefers to see them dead than to allow them to remain in Jason's custody. A fit of madness comes over her just before she kills one son, and she sees visions of furies and her brother's ghost.

After the first killing she climbs to the housetop carrying the dead son, and her second child follows in ridiculous obedience. Jason appears in the street below and pleads with Medea to spare the other boy. Medea is filled with remorse for one brief moment but steels her resolve with

1. F. J. Miller, op. cit., Act V, p. 111.

the thought that Jason is all to blame anyway. She says to Jason:

> Though both my sons I slay,
> The number still is all too small to satisfy
> My boundless grief.[1]

Her purpose in killing one child in view of Jason's grief-stricken eyes is to inflict more pain upon him. When the second murder has been accomplished a wingedchariot appears in the air, and Medea makes her dramatic exit.

This last scene is somewhat anti-climatic. Seneca does not include a last bitter, ironic scene between the parents nor does he make an issue over the burial of the children. Medea sails away into the air, but no mention has been made of her destination. She merely says:

> Now, father, take thy sons; while I upon my car,
> With winged speed am borne aloft through realms of air.[2]

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1. F. J. Miller, op. cit., Act V, p. 113.
2. Ibid., p. 114.

3. Comparison with Euripides' Medea

Euripides emphasizes the human suffering of Medea; he presents a psychological study of a normal mind endowed with above normal intelligence and taxed beyond normal endurance. Medea is a proud, magnificent woman hemmed in by a society whose customs she does not understand and judged by men who do not understand her.

Seneca makes his portrayal of Medea more a study of criminal psychology and so loses something of the emotional power of the Greek play. His Medea is an exaggeration of the conventional barbaric sorceress, a sensational figure who exhibits abnormal tendencies of behavior. She is fundamentally a savage woman, possessing magic powers which she usually puts to evil use. Our first impression of Medea, and one that is hard to shake off, shows her calling upon the Gods for vengeance:

> Ye crime-avenging furies, come and loose
> Your horrid locks with serpent coils entwined, and grasp
> With bloody hands the smoking torch; be near as once
> Ye stood in dread array beside my wedding couch.
> Upon this new-made bride destruction send, and death
> Upon the king and all the royal line! But he,
> My husband, may he live to meet some heavier doom;
> This curse I imprecate upon his head;[1]

This first impression never leaves us, but Seneca does present Medea in a more sympathetic light at times. This lack of consistency weakens rather than strengthens his characterization. A woman who argues persuasively and

1. F. J. Miller, op. cit., Act 1, p. 83.

logically with both Creon and Jason and then rushes off to call upon snakes and monsters for help is certainly exhibiting abnormal behavior.

Seneca does not put much weight behind Medea's love for Jason. It is an important factor but not the great driving force behind her actions. This love is more possessive than passionate; Medea, deprived of any other possession, would be almost as formidable. Medea cries out helplessly against her misfortune, but the following speech does not reveal the depth of grief shown in a similar passage of Euripides:[1]

> How harsh upon mine ears doth grate
> The song! And even now I cannot comprehend
> The vast extent of woe that hath befallen me.
> Could Jason prove so false?[2]

Both dramatists show the inward struggle of Medea's soul before she kills her children. But again Euripides' treatment is more human. His Medea wishes to cause Jason intense pain, but her final act of murder is prompted more by protective instinct than desire for revenge. She has already gone too far to prevent the deaths of her children. It is just a question of whose hand will deal the fatal blows. In Seneca's play Medea deliberately decides to kill her children in order to get back at Jason. His love for the boys makes a vulnerable target at which Medea is quick to aim.

In both plays there is much said about Medea's pride in her lineage, and many references are made concerning her

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1. See p. 19.
2. F. J. Miller, op. cit., Act II, p. 86.

intervention in behalf of the Argonauts. Euripides, however, avoids putting emphasis on Medea's past deeds of horror. Seneca recalls them to our mind:

> Now lash thy soul
> With memory's scourge, and call thy dark deeds in review;
> The glory of thy father's kingdom reft away;
> Thy brother, guiltless comrade of thy guilty flight,
> All hewn in pieces and his corpse strewn on the deep,
> To break his royal father's heart; and, last of crimes,
> Old Pelias by his daughters slain at thy command.[1]

Euripides' conception of Medea is human and realistic; the ennobling dignity and majesty of her soul sublimates the tragic themeof Medea. Seneca's Colchian sorceress is a more formidable but less tragic figure. His treatment does not elevate the tone, but results in a deterioration into melodrama.

Jason's character has also changed in Seneca's play. Instead of Euripides' vigorous, pompous hero we have a timid weakling who seems anything but a daring adventurer. Euripides' Jason is more detestable, but one can feel his strength and magnetism. Seneca's Jason is afraid of Medea, afraid of royal authority, and afraid of himself. His one saving grace is the strong bond which ties him to his children.

The broken, stricken man seen at the end of Euripides' play is also portrayed in Seneca's. But he does not present such a pathetic sight. His personality has never been strong enough, and it is hard to feel sorry for him at the end. The tragedy of Euripides' hero is his sudden and tremendous

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1. F. J. Miller, op. cit., Act II, p. 86.

fall from power. Seneca's Jason never reaches any great pinnacle and so does not have far to fall.

Seneca imitates Euripides in his portrayal of Creon, but the characterization is less forceful. The nurse differs somewhat from Euripides' conception in that she is calculating and shrewd rather than philosophical. Seneca's children are nothing more than props--dummies made out of saw dust would be just as effective and more realistic. They never speak, and move about the stage like puppets. Euripides' children are not wholly life-like, but their presence does create a note of pathos. Creusa does not appear on the stage in either of the two tragedies, but in Euripides' her death arouses a feeling of pity. Seneca's Creusa does not affect our emotions; our attitude toward her is too impersonal for real feeling.

The choral songs in the Roman tragedy are longer and heavier than those of the Greek Medea. They are narrative in style and only loosely connected with the plot. Euripides' verse echoes with the significance of the joy and suffering of life. In Seneca there is some philosophical appeal, but it does not go as deep. A sample of one of Seneca's better choral odes is:

> Too bold the man who first upon the seas,
> The treacherous seas, his fragile bark confides;
> Who, as the well-known shore behind him glided,
> His life intrusted to the fickle breeze;
>
> And, as his unknown seaward course he sped
> Within his slender craft with foolish daring,

Midway 'twixt life and death went onward faring,
Along the perilous narrow margin led.[1]

The main purpose of the Roman chorus is to divide the acts, much like the use of the modern curtain. In Medea, aside from this mechanical aspect, the function of the chorus is to show sympathy for Jason. This reversal of attitude since Euripides' play is the most distinctive feature of Seneca's chorus.

From a structural standpoint the two outstanding differences in Seneca's play concern his method of relating Creusa's death and his handling of the children's deaths. Duckworth defends Seneca's treatment of the messenger scene. He says that the death of the children is the all-important catastrophe, and a lengthy description of the deaths of Creon and Creusa would detract from the climax. He maintains that Medea's previous description of the poisoned robe has already foreshadowed its dire effects and that further mention of it is unnecessary.[2]

This is a scrupulously fair criticism, but Euripides' more startling method seems far more effective to me. The messenger's electric description is the climax of his play and results in the final catastrophe. Seneca saves his climax for the murder of the children, the poisoned robe episode merely leading up to the last event.

There is no justification, however, for the shedding of

1. F. J. Miller, op. cit., Act II, p. 92.
2. George E. Duckworth, The Complete Roman Drama, pp. 582-583.

blood on-stage which, in fact, is a departure from Seneca's usual custom. By deviating from stage convention he creates a thoroughly horrible, unrealistic scene. This is melodrama at its worst, capturing none of the subtlety of Euripides' more restrained treatment.

Missing in Seneca's Medea is the problem of the eternal antagonism between the arrogant male and the woman struggling to assert her independence. Seneca's story is a conventional treatment of the Greek legend told in a flamboyant, floridly rhetorical manner. He indulges in occasional poetic flights of fancy, numerous allusions to mythology, and long passages of declamation. A supernatural, evil atmosphere pervades the play. There is a confusing mixture of natural emotions, the mysticism of madness, and of sophistry strained almost to the ridiculous.[1]

Seneca's Medea lacks the emotional depth of Euripides' great tragedy, but it is a far better play than most critics admit.[2] He reveals rhetorical ingenuity of a high order and a marked sense of dramatic effect.[3] Drama owes a great debt to this Roman tragedian, despite his many faults, the sincerest approval of his works being shown in the imitation of Seneca that has occurred since his time.

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1. P. W. Harsh, op. cit., p. 420.
2. G. E. Duckworth, op. cit., p. 583.
3. John Gassner, op. cit., p. 76.

IV. PIERRE CORNEILLE

1. His Life and Age; French Classical Drama

After the fall of the Roman Empire the drama disintegrated and was later almost stamped out of existence by the Church. Strolling players kept alive the spirit of drama but did not greatly influence it. Surprisingly enough it was the Church that gave shape to modern drama. The ritual of Mass, with its solemnity, spectacle, and music, already possessed the essential qualities of drama; this led to simple presentations of bible stories known as mystery plays.

The drama of France, as in other countries, grew out of these mystery plays, but native, earthy ingredients took the place of the earlier religious flavoring. Farce became the distinct type of French literature, tragedy being largely an imitation of Seneca. Corneille and Racine are the most famous of the French tragedians whose works are still read.

Pierre Corneille was born in 1606 in Rouen, Normandy, in a century that was to become the golden age of French literature. The assassination of Henry IV had brought to an end the days of peace and prosperity. Louis XIII reigned under the extravagant, absolute regency of his mother, Marie de Medici, until he came of age. Fortunately for France,

the brilliant statesman, Cardinal Richelieu, became Louis' Prime Minister, and guided by his firm hand, the country plunged into an exciting, prosperous era. Richelieu was an ardent patron of the arts, and it was under his tutelage that Corneille rose to eminence as a dramatist.

Young Pierre, the eldest of seven children, was educated at a Jesuit College, and following the wishes of his father studied law. He showed little interest in practising at the bar and after 1627 turned to his main interest, poetry. He fell in love, and although the young lady married another man, Corneille's simple, sincere ardor burned in his heart for many years. His first play, Mélite, produced in Paris in 1629, was said to have been inspired by Corneille's unrequited passion.[1] It was not very successful despite its inspirational background, and the young dramatist threw himself into a study of the rules of the drama, rules of which he had not even been aware back in the province of Rouen.

These rules embraced what we now refer to as classicism. They were laid down by the French Academy, whose members believed they were carrying on traditions established by Aristotle.[2] The classical unities were rigidly adhered to, and a mixture of comedy and tragedy was religiously avoided. The dramatist became so hampered by rules that a national drama was stifled at the outset.

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1. Charles A. Sainte-Beuve, Portraits of the Seventeenth Century, p. 38.
2. Henry W. Trollope, Corneille and Racine, p. 9.

In classical drama ideas of chivalry and gallantry were expressed by characters whose speech was stilted, affected and sentimental. A halo of glory surrounded the stage personages, who moved and acted in a forced, unnatural state.[1] This is the drama that Corneille studied from 1629-1636.

During these years Richelieu attached him to his service, and in 1635 Corneille produced Medée, in imitation of Seneca. He was still experimenting, and despite its many flaws Medée is a historical landmark on the road of progress in Corneille's career.[2]

The dazzling success of Le Cid, produced in January, 1637, established the fame of Corneille almost overnight. The French Academy, however, had nothing to do with its enthusiastic reception and criticized it severely. But public pressure was too great, and in 1647 Corneille was elected to the Academy by members who only a few years before had shown vociferous disapproval.

Corneille temporarily retired from playwriting in 1653 but returned to the stage six years later. And although he put his whole life and all his soul into the theatre, outside of it he was worth but little. As a young man he had been reserved and timid, fully conscious of his inability to talk easily and pleasantly in general society.[3] As an old man he was brusque, taciturn and melancholy.[4]

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1. Henry M. Trollope, Corneille and Racine, p. 11.
2. L. D. Lodge, op. cit., p. 74.
3. H. M. Trollope, op. cit., p. 19.
4. C. A. Sainte-Beuve, op. cit., p. 54.

He was granted a pension in 1663, but when he died in 1684 he was virtually a pauper. The inscription placed on a bust of Corneille outside the house in which he died, reflects the proud spirit of the old man:

Je ne dois qu'à moi seul toute ma renommée.[1]

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1. H. M. Trollope, op. cit., p. 19, 28.

2. Medée; Treatment of Plot and Characterization

Medée, in conforming with the rules of classical drama is divided into five acts, with scenes automatically created by the entrance or exit of characters, and is written in iambic hexameter with rhyming couplets. The chorus has been dropped, but its function is served by the use of "confidantes".

Medée opens with a long scene between Jason and his confidante, Pollux. Instead of a prologue, Corneille uses the question and answer method; Pollux questions Jason concerning the events leading up to his imminent marriage to Creusa, and in answering, Jason gives a complete background of the Medea legend. Corneille succeeds in telling the whole story, but his stiff dialogue is boring and undramatic. Jason ends his narrative by justifying his marriage to Creusa; as in Seneca's play, concern over his children's welfare has given Jason no alternative but to leave Medea.

Corneille is the first dramatist to bring Creusa upon the stage; she first appears in a short scene with Jason in which she hints at some favor she desires.

Our first sight of Medea takes us back to where Seneca began his story, as she cries out:

> Sovereign protectors of marriage,
> O Gods, guaranteeing the faith that Jason gave,
> Ye who witnessed the everlasting ardor
> And the false oath that vanquished me,
> See with what contempt his perjury affronts you,
> And aid me in avenging this common injury.[1]

1. Pierre Corneille, Oeuvres de Pierre Corneille, Medée, translated by Marjory Bagby, Act I, Sc. iv, p. 350.

According to Voltaire, "Voici des vers qui annoncent Corneille."[1] Medea's soliloquy is very long and differs from Seneca's version in that Medea expresses her intention of killing the children.

The most famous lines of the play occur in the next scene. Nerine, a confidante who takes the place of the nurse, warns Medea that she is homeless and asks what she can do in her position.

Medea's ringing answer is:

> Myself: Myself I say, and that is enough.
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> ---
>
> You see in me alone sword and fire,
> And land and sea, the sky and earth below,
> The sceptre of Kings and the thunder of the Gods.[2]

Compare these lines with Seneca's less vibrant passage.[3] Corneille surpasses the Roman tragedian with his power of expression, conciseness, and energy.

In Act Two Nerine pleads with Medea not to plot against Jason's life. Medea reassures her that she intends harm only to Creon and Creusa who have forced Jason into an unholy tie. This sentiment is found also in Seneca.

Corneille follows Seneca very closely in the next scene as Creon confronts Medea. When Medea asks for justice Creon makes the same kind of sarcastic rejoinder; he listens to her rebuttal in which she claims amnesty for saving the Argonauts; he clears Jason of all blame in her crimes; and

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1. L. D. Lodge, op. cit., p. 70
2. P. Corneille, op. cit., Act I, Sc. v, p. 356.
3. See p. 43.

he gives her the one day of grace. Corneille's reasoning is more powerful and more carefully expounded, and it is in this kind of dialectic fencing that he excels.[1]

Aegeus, who appeared in Euripides' play but not in Seneca's, is mentioned in the next scene as being the rejected suitor of Creusa. Jason and Creusa then discuss their mutual love, treating each other with great respect and honor. But it seems that Creusa has a purpose in flattering her lover; she is quite taken with a very beautiful robe in Medea's possession and asks Jason to obtain it for a wedding present.

Creusa's attendant, Cleone, warns Jason and Creusa of Aegeus' approach, and Jason leaves knowing his presence will only add to Aegeus' royal anger. Creusa attempts to pacify the old King with cajoling words of flattery; but Aegeus will not accept her decision to marry Jason, whom he considers a murderer, and swears revenge. Corneille, taking a cue from Euripides but expanding his idea, is carefully preparing for Medea an avenue of escape.

Nerine is not the loyal nurse of the Greek and Roman tragedies. At the beginning of Act Three she confesses that fear of Medea forces her to obey all her commands, but her sympathy goes out to Jason and Creusa. When Jason asks her to persuade Medea to give the glittering robe to Creusa, she promises to do what she can.

Medea enters at this moment, collaring Jason before he

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1. L. D. Lodge, op. cit., p. 73.

can slip away. She accuses him of ingratitude, listing methodically the many deeds she has performed for him. He replies with injured dignity that he has saved her from death, since without his interference Creon would have put her to death. She thanks him sarcastically for the "favor" of being banished. And as for her crimes:

> You persume in vain to be innocent of them:
> For who benefits from crime commits it.[1]

Her accusation is very reminiscent of Seneca[2] as is this whole scene. Jason emphasizes his concern for his children and his fear of Creon's power. Medea is scornful of any power but her own; she asks Jason to return to her, admitting that she has not ceased loving him. When he refuses, she asks for permission to take the children into exile. This is the one thing that Jason will not allow, and after he leaves Medea re-echoes the exultant thought of Seneca's heroine:[3]

> He loves his children, this unyielding spirit;
> His weakness is discovered; through them he is vulnerable;
> And armed with just anger I will find a way to pierce his heart.[4]

To save the children Nerine reveals Creusa's intrigue to obtain Medea's robe, hoping that a plan against Creusa's life will satisfy Medea's desire for revenge.

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1. P. Corneille, op. cit., Act III, Sc iii, p. 382.
2. See p. 45.
3. See p. 46.
4. P. Corneille, op. cit., Act III, Sc. iv, p. 387.

In Act Four we see Medea in her magic grotto, and although less horrible, her incantations remind us of Seneca's Medea. Medea hears a commotion outside, and departing now from Seneca's version, Nerine describes Aegeus' unsuccessful attempt to kidnap Creusa. Jason and Pollux have come to her rescue, and the unhappy King is now languishing in jail. Medea, always alert to opportunity, plans to free Aegeus and use his kingdom as a place of refuge.

Later Medea appears in Aegeus' cell, and with a wave of her magic wand, his prison door opens. Aegeus wishes to show his gratitude by raising an army against Jason and Creon. Medea replies proudly that she does not need mortal aid; all she asks is that he provide her a safe home in Athens. To help him escape she makes him invisible, leaving a phantom figure in prison in his place. Corneille's wand waving heroine is quite different in this scene from the Medea of Euripides and Seneca.

In the meantime, Creon, at the instigation of the suspicious Pollux, has made sure that Medea's robe contained no death-dealing charm by trying it on a man who was already condemned to death.

In the last act Medea waylays an attendant of Creon and through him discovers that Creon's precautions were in vain. Creusa and Creon are at that moment in mortal agony, wrapped in the murderous folds of Medea's robe. The time has come for Medea to kill her children, but as in Euripides' and

Seneca's Medea, she is overcome by love for her children. In Corneille, however, her struggle is shorter and not very convincing.

The next scene is unique in all the treatments of the Medea story in that we see on stage the deaths of Creon and Creusa. Creon finally kills himself with a dagger rather than witness his daughter's suffering, and Creusa dies a few minutes later in the presence of Jason. Before she dies she pleads with her lover not to take his life, but to remain alive and avenge their murder. Jason is beside himself with grief and fury and in his madness thinks of killing the children. Jason does not express this murderous thought in any of the other Medea plays.

As in Seneca, Medea appears upon the housetop; her children are already dead, however, and we are saved the gruesome sight of seeing them murdered. Medea is borne off on her winged chariot, but Corneille does not end Medée here. Jason realizes he will never be able to bring Medea to justice. And after a long death oration he commits suicide. Jason's death is another instance of Corneille's originality and is typical of the endings of most classical tragedies.

Corneille's characters all speak with the consciousness of propriety and honor. They are fitted into a narrow mold which does not allow room for any depth or individuality. Almost every scene is a debate between two loquacious people who expound their arguments in a very polite, formal manner.

Corneille's characters have forceful, punctilious minds, but such long-winded dialogue becomes dull and uninteresting.

Medea is patterned after Seneca's Colchian princess, but Corneille's treatment of her character is less spontaneous and more analytical. She is not a savage; she abides by her code of ethics as rigorously as do the other characters. Her mind is shrewd and calculating, her spirit unbending. She thinks before she acts, but once her mind is made up there is no turning back. To do so would be cowardly and unworthy of her heritage.

Jason has broken his pledge, and honor demands that she get retribution. Creon and Creusa must be punished for their part in Jason's infidelity. The children must not remain behind to fall into enemy hands. Medea's road is clear, and once she has formulated a plan vengeance is assured.

The total effect of Corneille's conception of Medea is less human than Euripides' magnificent characterization and less vigorous than Seneca's wild sorceress.

Jason is a combination of qualities found in Euripides and Seneca. He is just as pompous and self-centered as the hero of the Greek tragedy, but he candidly admits his faults to Pollux in the first scene. He confesses that he loves according to the state of his fortunes and has little conscience about discarding a woman who is no longer useful. Medea served Jason well, but now furtune has cast his lot another way, the way of Kings.

But Jason believes he is doing his duty by marrying Creusa and abandoning Medea. Again it is paternal love that guides his actions; but Corneille's hero is perfunctorily imitating the Jason of Seneca, and his love is less convincing. He does not quaver before Medea as does Seneca's Argonaut prince but argues just as persuasively as she does. He says that he fears Creon's royal sovereignty, but his actions do not confirm his fear. He acts more like a man who knows exactly what he is doing and why.

Creon is every inch a King, and Creusa every inch a princess. Her childish desire for Medea's robe brings her to a tragic end, but she dies nobly accepting her share of the blame. Although Corneille brings Creusa's death right before our eyes, her death seems no more pathetic than the narrative method of Euripides and Seneca.

Nerine's lack of affection for Medea is not found in the nurse of Euripides or Seneca. They both are deeply loyal to Medea although not wholly approving. Nerine neither approves of nor sympathizes with her mistress, but she must give at least lip service to preserve her own life. Only a minor character, her selfish outlook seems more realistic than the nobility of the main characters.

Aegeus' infantile love for Creusa has been ridiculed by some critics,[1] but I think Corneille's most interesting innovation is his characterization of the childish, old man.

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1. Francois Guizot, Corneille and His Times, p. 47.

Aegeus' infatuation for the princess is a realistic touch, and his dramatic attempt to abduct her adds color and excitement to the story. The presence of Euripides' Aegeus in Corinth does not make as much sense as Corneille's more romantic explanation.

Corneille's purpose in writing tragedy is not to arouse pity, or fear, but admiration. This trait is evident throughout Medée in the lofty speeches of all the main characters. Personal honor is important to Corneille, and his heroes and heroines always value it above life.

Medée is the least exciting of the three plays that I have studied so far. Corneille's long moral discourses weaken the action, and thought and reason blot out imagination. We can admire Corneille's high seriousness, however, in extolling the strength and firmness of humanity. And in Medée, although an unequal tragedy, we find some touches of that sublimity which is the peculiar excellence of Corneille.[1]

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1. L. D. Lodge, op. cit., p. 65.

V. RICHARD GLOVER

1. His Life and Age; 18th Century English Drama

England in the eighteenth century was a hive of literary activity, particularly in the field of drama. Innumerable playwrights turned out innumerable plays whose distinguishing characteristic was poor quality. From the great mass of dramatic material written during this busy century only the plays of Sheridan and Goldsmith are popularly known today. The bulk of plays written from 1700-1800 came from the pens of obscure playwrights whose names have been forgotten along with their works. Richard Glover is representative of this group but is important to my study because of his Medea.

He was born in London in 1712, the son of an eminent merchant. He was educated in London, wrote poetry while in school but eventually became a merchant like his father. His interest in poetry never waned, however, and throughout his life he kept up a close association with the literary men of London.

He married a wealthy woman in 1737 and could then easily afford the luxury of dabbling in poetry. Shortly after the wedding he published Leonidas, a long epic poem which

established his poetical reputation. His popularity was due more to the patriotic fervor of the poem than to its poetical merit.[1]

Glover entered into politics as vigorously as he did the writing of poetry and became a sturdy champion of liberty and freedom. He was a fine orator, and because of his knowledge of trade and commerce and political affairs in general he became a well known figure in government circles. In 1742 he appeared before Parliament to present the grievances of the merchants of London.

During the next few years Glover was in and out of politics; in when his finances were such that he could neglect his business and out when too zealous attention to politics caused his fortunes to dwindle. He found time to write a very poor tragedy, Boadicea, which was performed at the Drury-Lane in 1753.

He published Medea in 1761, and it was acted at the Drury-Lane for the first time six years later. Mrs. Yates, a well-known actress during her day, played the part of Medea. The dramatist wrote a sequel to Medea many years later, but it was never acted because the scenery required was too expensive.[2]

Mr. Glover was elected to parliament the same year that Medea was published and until his retirement in 1775

1. Robert Anderson, A Complete Edition of the Poets of Great Brôtian, vol. 11, p. 468.
2. R. Anderson, op. cit., p. 472.

was very active in promoting the interests of the London merchants. He also fought against the heavy taxation of America and supported those who belived in the inalienable rights of man.[1] He lived through the unhappy conflict with the new country across the ocean and died toward the end of the century, in November 1785.

Medea, although produced for the stage, is more of a "closet" drama than an acting drama. It was only one of a great many dramas written for the closet in the eighteenth century, a form which was a manifestation of a general dramatic debility during this period.[2] This disintegration of drama was a hangover from the "heroic tragedy" of the Restoration period which had become more and more sentimental and melodramatic.

At the beginning of the century precepts of pseudo-classicism pervaded the drama; a gradual emergence of romantic principles took place, and by the end of the century classicism was an outworn creed.

The low ebb of drama was largely a reflection of the poor taste and ignorance of the average theatre-goer. Audiences were too concerned with morality and sensibility, painfully conscious of decorum, and too indifferent to quality. Pseudo-classical tragedy was tolerated because of lethargy and conventional prejudice, not because audiences preferred it.

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1. R. Anderson, op. cit., p. 473.
2. Allardyce Nicoll, A History of Late Eighteenth Century Drama, p. 227.

From records of performances we may assume that too often audiences sat through plays complacently accepting them as necessary evils without any critical perception.[1] The first performance of Medea in 1767 was before such an audience, the only difference being that Medea was perhaps a shade better than other plays put on at the Drury-Lane.

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1. A. Nicoll, op. cit., p. 88.

2. Plot Treatment and Characterization of Medea

Richard Glover's Medea is an interesting relic of Senecan influence.[1] It has the usual five acts, each divided by a choral interlude with penned in cretics, iambics and trochaics. Stage directions indicate that music accompanied the solemn recitatives of the choruses.

The story opens under circumstances similar to those of previous versions but with a new twist. Jason has been in Corinth for some time, having come to seek aid from Creon in driving the son of the usurping Pelias from Jason's country, Iolcos. Because of pressure brought to bear on him from Creon and from his own father, Aeson, he has finally agreed to marry Creusa. In the meantime, Medea, tiring of her lonely wait in Iolcos, set sail for Corinth to join her lord Jason. She has just reached the shores of Corinth when Glover's play begins.

Theano, the priestess presiding over the sacred temple of Juno, is expecting Medea and is determined to shelter her from the tyrannical Creon. Theano has already opposed the marriage of Jason and Creusa, incurring the wrath of the King. Her brother, Lycander, shares her views but is afraid to oppose the King so openly, lacking his sister's priestly immunity.

Theano receives the band of Colchian strangers who describe their plight and Medea's search for Jason. She

1. A. Nicoll, op. cit., p. 71.

promises them shelter and after their departure faces the aroused Creon. When Creon discovers that Medea has touched his shores he becomes even angrier, but Theano ignores his outburst maintaining that Medea shall not be harmed in her grove.

Then Glover brings Jason's father on the stage, the only one of the dramatists to do so. He has been forced to flee from Iolcos and looks to Creon for protection. He is much concerned over Medea's presence in Corinth, warning Creon that her beauty and wisdom are powerful weapons. And as Medea approaches with her two children they withdraw hastily. Medea's first speech is vaguely reminiscent of Seneca's heroine, but here her adjurations to the Gods are mild in comparison. She does not ask for revenge but desires comfort in her time of sorrow.

The act ends with alternating choral passages between groups of Colchian men. One verse is similar in thought to the first stasimon of Euripides:[1]

> O Music, sweet artificer of pleasure,
> Why is thy science exercis'd alone
> In festivals, on hymeneal days,
> And in the full assemblies of the happy?
> Ah! how much rather should we court thy skill
> In sorrow's gloomy season, to diffuse
> Thy smooth allurements through the languid ear
> Of self-devour'd affliction, and delude
> The wretched from their sadness.[2]

We meet Jason at the beginning of the next act, a subdued and sorrowful Jason. From Theano he learns of Medea's

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1. See p. 18.
2. Richard Glover, Medea, Act I, p. 19.

arrival and realizing the wrong he has done his family promises to renounce Creusa and her kingdom. Even Aeson cannot dissuade Jason from his decision, and fortified by this new spiritual strength Jason faces Medea.

Glover is at his best in this scene. He has already unfolded the dramatic conflict that concerns his two main characters, and having given all the necessary background material he now brings Jason and Medea together. Following the example of Euripides and Seneca he has Medea reel off the many favors she has bestowed upon Jason. But Jason is not the pompous ingrate of Euripides' play nor the weakling of Seneca's. He is truly repentant, and if Medea would only listen he would apologize and ask forgiveness. Medea refuses to hear his explanation, however, and with one final insulting blast leaves Jason, who is now speechless with anger.

Aeson comes upon his abused son and now has no trouble in leading him back to Creon's palace for the wedding. The chorus, although in sympathy with the chastised Jason, warns him that he chances a worse fate if he marries Creusa. Their warning goes unheeded.

A pitiful little scene between Medea and her two children ensues at the beginning of the third act. The children have been asking for their father, and their bewilderment so upsets Medea that she sends them off with Theano to look after them. Then for the first time she confronts the powerful King who has caused her unhappiness.

He commands Medea to leave at once and is incensed at her scorn and lack of respect for his power. He threatens her and calls her names, but Medea lashes back at him. She says her power exceeds his sovereignty and that he has greater cause to fear calamity than she. At the end of her speech Medea loses heart, however, and in despair cries out the name of Jason. But realizing she must be patient she humbles herself and asks for three hours to remain in Corinth. Creon consents reluctantly and ungraciously departs.

As in Seneca's play we now have a scene in which Medea, conjuring up the spirits of darkness, waves, her magic wand and recites:

> Ah! leave awhile the vulture's shriek,
> The raven croaking o'er the dead,
> The midnight wolf's insatiate howl,
> And hither turn thy solemn pace.[1]

Hecate actually appears in Glover's version, on a darkened stage, and gives warning that although she will avenge Creon's wrongs, before night comes Medea will kill someone she loves. Medea, thinking of Jason, falls to the ground in anguish at the thought of killing her beloved hero. She asks the Colchian leader to find Jason and is now willing to forget her pride and anxious to be forgiven.

The choral song ending the act recalls the bygone days in Colchis, comparing them sadly with the unhappiness they have found since touching Greek lands.

Jason's entrance raises our hopes briefly, and we wonder

1. R. Glover, op. cit., Act III, pp. 44-45.

if this version of the Medea legend might possibly have a happy ending. Medea greets him repentantly offering him her love. Jason's unhappy announcement that he has already married Creusa shatters what hope we had and stuns Medea. The children are sent off so that they will be spared their mother's grief, and Medea breaks down completely. She becomes irrational and seems to be reenacting in her mind her first meeting with Jason in Colchis. Her hallucinations end with a vision of the figure of Revenge, and in this dangerous frame of mind she rushes off.

Lycander, entering at this moment to carry out Creon's exile decree, is bewildered by Jason's hostile attitude. Creon then appears, as Lycander says, "to widen this confusion,"[1] and Jason announces that he wishes to annul his marriage to Creusa. He makes an exit to avoid further argument with Creon, who by this time is in a raging fury. Creon orders his men to surround Medea's ship and to allow no one to leave Corinth. Then turning upon Lycander, whom he blames for not preventing a meeting between Medea and Jason, he commands him to be seized. Theano forbids his men to touch her brother, and Creon dashes out to raise enough men to attach her sacred grove.

Jason returns, and worried by Medea's disappearance sends Theano to look for her. Aeson enters upset at this newest disturbance, but Jason finally convinces him that they are honor bound to escape with Medea and the children. At

1. R. Glover, op. cit., Act IV ,p. 57.

the height of his moral resolve Jason prays to Juno for help, and the chorus adds to his prayer by seeking aid from Medea's powerful ancestry.

The last act opens with dramatic intensity as Theano describes the murder of the children committed by Medea in a fit of madness. Theano's description is Senecan in its style:

> Her fiery eye-balls on their wounds were fix'd;
> A ghastly triumph swell'd her wild revenge,
> And madness mingled smiles with horror![1]

Unaware of her gruesome and tragic deed Medea rushes in with bloody hands, still crazed and raving about scattering lightning fire from a burning chariot. Seneca's Medea also pictured a Corinth destroyed by fire in such fashion.

In the midst of all this melodrama Medea swoons and upon regaining consciousness also regains her sanity. Knowledge of her children's death and how they died leaves her spirit broken and torn by grief. Jason breaks in upon this unhappy scene ignorant of the recent catastrophe. He divulges his plans for escape, and the resulting dramatic irony is painful and brutal. He too crumbles under the shock of his children's slaughter, and Medea, unable to bear his misery, is about to stab herself with a dagger. The voice of the goddess Juno commands her to drop the dagger, and Medea obeys.

The stage now becomes a scene of chaos and confusion. Lycander and Aeson rush in to warn Jason of Creon's martial

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1. R. Glover, op. cit., Act V, p. 66.

approach, and thunder and lightning add to the unreality of the action. Creon is killed by the aroused citizenry off-stage, and Theano announces that the vengeance of the Gods is at an end. It has been decreed that Medea must go alone to wander paths of exile, and a winged chariot is again provided for her dramatic departure. Her parting speech is very different from those of the preceding plays, being forgiving and sorrowful instead of vindictive and triumphant:

> Ah! what detains me longer in the sight
> Of hateful Corinth? But on thee to cast
> A parting look, and some forgiving tears
> Shed on thy errors, Jason--oh, farewell![1]

Jason attempts to kill himself but is stopped by Theano. Her parting advice, and the last speech of the play, urges Jason to recover his self-respect by redeeming his father's kingdom, and to atone for his sins by a righteous life in the future.

Richard Glover's version of Medea retains few of the characteristics found in Euripides' tragedy. The outward structure is similar, but the body of the play bears little resemblance. True, the names of the main characters have not changed; Jason's marriage to Creusa is the cause of the tragic action; the children are murdered by their mother off-stage; Medea is borne off on a chariot drawn by dragons; a chorus has been retained to comment on the action of the story. But let us examine the inside of the conventional framework.

1.R.Glover, op. cit., Act V, p. 78.

Glover's Medea is a sentimental treatment of the old legend consistent with the trend of eighteenth century drama. It is more akin to Shakespearean tragedy than to Greek, emphasizing action and surprise. This element of surprise sustains our interest even to the point where we hope for a happy ending. The tragic foreboding of Greek tragedy is missing; so are the complicated psychological motives that govern the behavior of Euripides' characters.

Jason's marriage to Creusa is the turning point of the play, and after this event catastrophe is inevitable. Melodrama, evident throughout the play, runs rampant in the last act. Medea bursts forth with anguished cries, Jason dashes in and out, and at the end the stage is all confusion with everyone shouting above the noise of the thunder.

This chaotic ending is exciting but lacks the tragic impact of Euripides' Medea. The children are dead, but we have almost forgotten their misfortune in the uproar that accompanies Creon's deserved death. Jason has some hope of living a useful life, so we cannot feel too sorry for him. Medea disappears into the unknown, and her future will probably be taken care of by sympathetic Gods.

Glover tells his story in verse that is as exuberant as the melodrama. It is not bad poetry but lacks subtlety. He seems to be imitating Shakespearean blank verse, but the effect is too decorative, redundant, and effusive.

A picture of Medea is drawn by the dramatist before she

actually appears on the stage, similar to Euripides' method. The Colchian leader makes reference to her wisdom and Aeson says later:

> Too well distinguish'd by her stately port,
> And elevation o'er that weeping train,
> She tow'rs a genuine offspring of the Gods.

> Avoid this formidable woman who may wound
> Our dignity. I know her soaring mind,
> Which, all enlighten'd with sublimest knowledge,
> Disdains the state and majesty of Kings,
> Nor ranks with less than deity itself.[1]

Glover emphasizes the dignity, the bearing, the beauty, and wisdom of Medea. Little mention is made of her sorcery or black enchantments except by Creon. We learn almost nothing of a background of crime in reading this play but carry away an impression of a kindly, womanly Medea.

Medea's tragic flaw is her pride and stubbornness. Against Creon these traits are admirable, but refusal to meet Jason halfway succeeds only in bringing on disaster. As Jason says:

> I dread that scorn and fury whose excess
> May kill repentance, and provoke destruction.[2]

After carefully building up the character of a strong-willed, purposeful but human Medea, the dramatist suddenly seems to prefer a different conception. In calling up Hecate from the underworld Medea resembles the enchantress of Seneca's play; toward the end of the play she goes to pieces and becomes an entirely different person. She seems weak,

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1. R. Glover, op, cit., Act I, p. 16.
2. Ibid., Act II, p. 25.

vaccilating, and erratic. Glover's purpose, of course, is to represent Medea as being temporarily insane at the time she kills her children, and thus to mitigate her offense. But her actions at the end of the play are inconsistent with our first strong impression of her, and Glover's characterization lacks depth and realism.

The character of Jason is better and more consistently portrayed. At first he seems modeled after Seneca's weak Jason, but as the story progresses he attains greater moral strength and dignity. Glover's treatment is more sympathetic than that of any of the preceding dramatists, and at times Jason is made a stronger figure than Medea. He is pushed into his marriage contract with Creusa and fulfills it only after making an unsuccessful attempt to conciliate Medea. After the marriage he recognizes his mistake and makes a valiant effort to extricate himself from a bad situation. Even after the tragic death of his children he remains resolved and noble.

The tragedy in Medea stems from the inevitability of destiny, not from a conflict between man and woman as in Euripides' play.

Creon is the only real villain. He is pictured as a cruel, hard headed tyrant, used to having his own way. Individual freedom and independence are an affront to his sovereignty, and he rides rough shod over any opposition. Creon personifies the kind of tyranny that Glover spoke out

against all during his lifetime.

Creusa remains off-stage again in this play but makes absolutely no impression on us, even escaping her usual fate. The children have more to say in Glover's version, but their characterization differs little from that of the other plays. Theano, a conventional, wise, majestic priestess, is not particularly interesting nor is Aeson, Jason's anxious father. Lycander, with his materialistic outlook, is given some humorous touches by Glover.

Richard Glover's Medea is decidedly inferior to Euripides' tragedy but can be compared on fairly equal terms with the plays of Seneca and Corneille. "In the closet it will give pleasure to such as are fond of the Ancient Drama; a Greek subject in the dress of a Roman poet, modernized a little by an English writer of considerable merit."[1]

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1. From an Introduction to Glover' Medea.

VI. FRANZ GRILLPARZER

1. His Life and Age; German Drama

The drama of Germany originated in the Church ritual as in the other countries of Europe but was slow in developing. It was not until the late eighteenth century that the literature of Germany became a dominating influence on the continent. Miss Sara Sampson, a forerunner to middle-class tragedy, was the first important dramatic work, and the young author, Gotthold Lessing, later became an outstanding playwright and critic.

The most powerful movement in German drama was called the "storm-and stress" period and had for its apostles such men as Goethe and Schiller. These dramatists were greatly influenced by Shakespeare and stressed imagination, love of freedom, and individualism. Franz Grillparzer was born into this new age, and although he was an Austrian by birth and residence, his plays are included in the general category of German drama.

He was born in Vienna in 1791 and throughout his life was under the spell of Austria's famous capital. His father was a lawyer, self-made, respectable, and comparatively poor. He was a stern man, with a clear intellect that could accept

only the very serious things of life. Franz's mother was abnormally nervous, melancholy, and passionately devoted to music. Franz inherited his mother's artistic impulses and his father's sense of duty, and the two traits waged a continual battle inside the boy's sensitive, imaginative mind.[1]

He studied law at the University of Vienna, and while he was still a student his father died. Franz now found himself the head of a family in very straitened circumstances, but by tutoring on the side he earned enough money to finish school. He eventually began an unexciting career in the Austrian civil service and became a conscientious, hard-working official.

In the meantime Napoleon was on the march and in 1809 had bombarded and entered Vienna. Grillpárzer keenly felt this national humiliation[2] and must have been elated when Napoleon was defeated at Leipzig four years later.

Even while carrying out his monotonous official duties Grillparzer pursued his interest in writing. He had written poetry from early youth, read avidly, and shared his mother's devotion to music. His earlier plays are reminiscent of Shakespeare and Schiller, both of whom he greatly admired. In later years he felt that the dramatic spirit of Lope de Vega was most closely akin to his.[3]

The only man in Vienna who exerted strong personal

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1. William G. Howard, "The Life of Franz Grillparzer", The German Classics, Vol. VI, p. 215.
2. John L. Kind, Des Meeres Undder Liebe Wellen, Intro., p. xx.
3. W. G. Howard, op. cit., p. 219.

influence upon Grillparzer was Josef Schreyvogel, a critic, playwright, and theatre manager.[1] Grillparzer's first play, The Ancestress, was produced in 1816 under Schreyvogel's auspices and marked the beginning of a successful partnership. The Ancestress and Grillparzer's next play, Sappho, were both popular and established the dramatist's reputation.

Pleased by public acclaim he began to write The Golden Fleece, his treatment of the Medea story. The impulse to treat this Greek theme came from an article on Medea which he had read in a lexicon on mythology.[2] But he felt that the story was too big for one play and embraced the whole history of the relations of Jason and Medea in a trilogy. Grillparzer was familiar with the tragedies of Euripides and Seneca, but his own imagination and philosophy color all three plays.

A younger brother had committed suicide in 1817, and just two years later while Franz was hard at work on his trilogy, his mother came to the same tragic end. Her mind had long been unbalanced, but Franz, always close to his mother, felt her death keenly. His health failed due to the shock, and he took an extensive trip to regain his physical and mental stamina.

On his return to Vienna he wrote a series of lyric poems which unfortunately dealt a damaging blow to his poetic and government career. One poem was accused of being heretical, and this and other charges dampened his creative ardor. He

1. W. G. Howard, op. cit., p. 217.
2. Ibid., p. 222.

had not yet finished The Golden Fleece but finally completed it, Medea being performed in March, 1821. This last play of the trilogy, written as it was after Grillparzer himself had come to the brink of self-destruction,[1] reflects the inner suffering of the dramatist. He had faced and conquered hard realities and from experience had learned to accept his weaknesses and the unhappiness of life as it came his way.

Grillparzer was a shy, sensitive man and led for the most part a solitary life. He was tall and blond and very attractive to the opposite sex. There were many women in his life, but his one lasting attachment was for Katharina Frohlich. They were both impetuous and stubborn and quarreled intermittently through the years.[2] They never married, as Grillparzer was irresolute and seemed to fear the permanency of marriage.

Although dogged by family tragedy and by disappointments in his career as a writer and as a government official, he became a national hero after he passed the prime of life. He disapproved of the revolution of 1848 and expressed his opposition in a spirited poem, "To Field-Marshal Count Radetsky." The enthusiastic reception of this poem won for Grillparzer the cross of the order of Leopold, and he became an object of public idolatry. He received the grand cross of the order of Franz Josef at the celebration of his eightieth birthday in 1871 and had now become the grand old man of Austrian letters. He felt the irony of the situation keenly, for just a small

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1. J. L. Kind, op. cit., p.xlix.
2. W. G. Howard, op. cit., p. 218.

part of this recognition, so sorely needed in the past, would have helped and inspired him. His reaction to these belated honors was, "Too late, too late."[1]

He died on January 21, 1872, and his death was mourned by the whole nation. The cemetery was filled to overflowing as the poet was laid to rest beside the immortal figures of Beethoven and Schubert.[2] The adulation of Austria had come late but was a magnificent tribute to a man whose first struggling years were spent as a humdrum government official.

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1. J. L. Kind, op. cit., p. xc.
2. Ibid. p. xciii.

2. The Golden Fleece; Plot of Medea

The Golden Fleece is a tragedy of will, the three plays showing the progressive accumulation of evil that accompanies a too greedy desire for fame and gain. The golden fleece symbolizes the psychic forces that are at work in the human heart,[1] conditioning the actions of Jason and Medea and eventually destroying them.

In The Guest-Friend Phryxus bears the golden fleece to Colchis and is killed by Aeetes. Medea attempts to prevent the crime but is implicated by her desire for the treasure. The Argonauts is the s tory of Jason's search for the fleece and of Medea's aid in obtaining it. Although determined at first to help her father repulse the invaders, she allows infatuation for Jason to weaken her will power and instead becomes his partner in theft and crime.

The action of Medea takes place four years later, shortly after the arrival of Jason and Medea in Corinth. They have been forced to flee Jason's home in Iolcos because of the mysterious death of Jason's uncle and have come to Corinth to seek shelter. Jason had lived in Corinth as a young man and had then been treated by the King as one of the family. When the play opens Medea, her nurse, Gora, and a slave are on the stage. The time is early morning just before daybreak.

Medea is putting all her articles of magic into a large, black chest, including a small chalice containing secret fire,

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1. J. L. Kind, op. cit., p. xlvi.

and last of all the renowned golden fleece now hanging from a shaft. She breaks the shaft in two, puts the fleece into the chest, and looks on while the chest is buried in a pit. Gora steps forward angrily and tries to prevent Medea from laying away her magic arts. She exclaims:

> Though still you kept it, it now is buried
> And so 'tis blotted out and gone!
> Blown away like a breath the past;
> All is present, there is no future.[1]

Gora goes on to remind Medea of her home in Colchis, the deaths of father and brother, and the scorn Medea has met in all Greek lands. They call her monster and all society shuns Jason too because of his barbarian wife. Medea endures these cutting remarks, but when Gora taunts her with reference to Jason's lukewarm love she speaks up:

> Think you what once has been must ever be
> And naught is but the present? If the moment
> Can be the cradle of the time to come,
> Why not as well the grave to swallow up the past?[2]

She intends to forget the past and abide by Greek customs without the aid of her magic powers:

> And weak, a helpless, unprotected woman,
> I throw me in my husband's open arms.
> He shunned, may be, the Colchian witch; his wife
> He will receive as any husband should.[3]

Grillparzer has given naturally and easily a few essential facts to piece together Medea's past and has given the keynote of Medea's character. Jason now steps out of a tent in the background and talks to a peasant who bears a message from the

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1. Franz Grillparzer, The Golden Fleece, Medea, translated by Arthur Burkhard, Act I, p. 8.
2. Ibid., p. 11.
3. Ibid., p. 12.

King. Creon has agreed to give Jason an audience, but Jason is not perceptibly cheered by this news. He fears that Creon will refuse him shelter and speaks roughly to Medea when she tries to reassure him. At his request she removes her Colchian veil, and Gora shows her disapproval of this act. The antipathy between Gora and Jason is brought out when he says:

> You also here?-'Tis you I hate the most!
> Let me but see these eyes, this brow of yours
> And Colchis' misty coast appears again.
> What brings you here, unbidden, near my wife?
> Begone![1]

Gora leaves in a sullen temper, and Jason throws himself on the ground like a small child about to have a tantrum. Medea brings in the children to pacify him, but the boys' innocent chatter angers him more. Jason feels a sudden twinge of pity for Medea, however, and pats her head comfortingly. He discusses with her their plight and expresses fear that Creon will accept him but not Medea. Medea is disturbed by this thought and is apprehensive as Creon, his daughter, and attendants enter.

Creusa steps forward unhesitatingly to greet Jason, but Creon remains aloof until Jason convinces him that he has committed no crime and more specifically had nothing to do with Pelias' death. A tense moment follows when Creusa, telling of stories circulated about Jason, says:

> And last they joined to you as wedded wife
> A monstrous, poison-mixing, father-slaying--
> How was she called?-By some barbarian name--[2]

Medea steps forward dramatically to finish Creusa's

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1. F. Grillparzer, op. cit., Act I, p.15.
2. Ibid., p. 23.

sentence, and Jason is obviously discomfited by her presence. At sight of the two children Creusa kneels beside them, speaking words of comfort. Medea, immediately on the defensive, calls them to her, but the children go reluctantly, fascinated by the beautiful, soft-spoken princess. Grillparzer is carefully building up a sharp contrast between the dark, passionate, Colchian woman and the fair Creusa.

Creon finally promises refuge to Jason and his family and turns to lead them back to his palace. Medea hangs back, and Creusa, aware of her injured feelings, apologizes for her first words. Medea is moved by Creusa's gentle words and eagerly informs her that she too is a princess. In a burst of poetry she warns Creusa of the pitfalls of life:

> Because you glided downstream in your fragile skiff
> With flowering trees along the banks to guide you,
> Rocked to and fro by dancing silver waves,
> You think yourself a pilot, tried and true?
> Outside beyond you, roars the sea;
> And if you dare to leave the sheltered shore,
> The tides will sweep you on their grey expanse.[1]

Medea then breaks down and weeps and asks Creusa to help her learn Greek ways. The princess is deeply affected by Medea's humility and leads her and the children back to the palace. Medea flares up, however, as she passes Creon and speaks sharply to him.

After the women leave Jason relates in detail his adventurous quest for the golden fleece, including his wooing of Medea and the misfortunes that plagued them afterwards. He again denies any complicity in the strange death of Pelias.

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1. F. Grillparzer, op. cit., Act I, p. 27.

Creon accepts his word but is reluctant to give Medea shelter in his country. Jason says:

> You must take both of us or none, oh king!
> I should be born anew, were she but gone;
> Yet I must guard what gives itself in trust.[1]

Creon gives in to Jason's argument but warns him that Medea will be banished if she shows any signs of having criminal intent.

At the beginning of Act Two Grillparzer introduces a scene that is entirely different from those of the preceding dramatists. Creusa tries to teach Medea how to play upon a Greek lyre and how to sing a song that Jason loved as a boy. Medea is anxious to learn, but her fingers are awkward and she has difficulty remembering the strange words. The pathos of her pitiful attempt to please Jason is felt keenly later on. He strides into the palace, completely ignoring his wife but showing great interest in Creusa. He pours out his troubles to her sympathetic ear and compares the former hero-worship of the Corinthians with the contempt he finds among them in the cruel present. Jason and Creusa then reminisce about their happy childhood, and Medea stands alone painfully aware of their absorption in each other.

She childishly insists upon singing her song, but Jason's contempt so unnerves her that she cannot remember the words. Jason's cruel comment is:

> You see, as I well knew, she cannot sing.
> Her hand is used to other play than this.

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1. F. Grillparzer, op. cit., Act I, p. 33.

With magic chant she made the dragon sleep,
And that with notes unlike your song's pure strain.[1]

He asks Creusa to play the lyre but Medea, weeping by this time, snatches the lyre and throws it down with a crash. The King interrupts this stormy scene with a startling announcement. A herald from Delphi has come to order the banishment of Jason and Medea for causing the death of Pelias. Medea has been accused of tricking the old man's daughters into bleeding him to death and then of escaping with the golden fleece. Creon refuses to admit that Jason had any part in the crime and to save the Argonaut proclaims him to be his future son-in-law. Medea, however, must leave Corinth by the next morning.

Medea, aroused by this turn of events, insists that she is innocent and refuses to depart without Jason. A powerful scene follows in which Jason and Medea face each other accusingly and unleash their anger. Jason shouts:

Begone from me, you curse of all my days,
Who robbed me of my life, and happiness,
Whom I abhorred when I beheld your face,
Though rashly I called love the torment in my breast[2].

Medea's reply is:

You call me evil?-Woe is me! I am!
Yet when have I done evil and for whom?
Let these pursue me with their poison hatred,
Drive me away and slay me; they are right,
For I am horrible, a fearful creature,
E'en to myself a terror, an abyss.
The world may curse me, all may curse, not you!
Not you, sole cause, creator of my horrid crimes![3]

1.F. Grillparzer, op. cit., Act II, p. 48.
2.F. Grillparzer, op. cit., Act II, p. 55.
3.Ibid., p. 56.

Not since Euripides' play has a dramatist given such fire to the arguments of the main characters. Grillparzer's scene is even more emotional than that of the Greek tragedian, Jason and Medea almost coming to blows. Medea's last act is to tear off her Greek mantle, and as she is about to depart she asks for her children. Creon and Jason refuse her request. Medea now at the full height of her fury turns upon them, and as Creon's soldiers move toward her she says:

> Stand back! Who dares lay hands upon Medea!
> Mark well, oh king, this hour when I depart,
> You ne'er have seen one darker, trust my word![1]

Creusa has made futile attempts in this scene to soften the blow dealt to Medea, but deeply hurt and jealous of the place she has in Jason's affection, Medea turns on Creusa:

> Are you here, too, you snow-white silvery serpent?
> Oh, hiss no more, nor dart your honeyed tongue,
> For you have now what was your wish, a husband!
> Was this the reason for your sweet caresses,
> Your coils so closely wound about my throat?
> Oh, had I but a dagger, that would serve
> You, and your father too, that righteous monarch![2]

In Act Three Gora pleads with Medea not to obey Creon but to stand her ground and remain in Corinth:

> But I tell you now; Stay!
> They shall not laugh at the Colchian,
> Not mock at the child of my royal house.[3]

This is only the second play in which fear of laughter is mentioned, and Grillparzer differs slightly from Euripides in that the nurse, not Medea, first brings it up. Similar to

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1. F. Grillparzer, op. cit., Act II, p. 60.
2. Ibid. Act II, p. 58.
3. Ibid.,Act III, p. 62.

Seneca and Corneille is Medea's reply when Gora reminds her that no land will shelter her and that the Greeks will kill her:

> Slay me? They me? I am the slayer, I![1]

Medea talks wildly of killing herself and the children and finally hits upon Creusa as her victim. Gora suggests that she kill Jason, whom the nurse hates savagely.

When Creon and Jason approach, Medea runs into her house not wishing to speak in the King's presence. Gora stays to face them and speaks up fearlessly and impudently to Creon. The angry monarch demands to see Medea, and Gora finally goes in to call her. Creon is determined to be rid of Medea but first wants to obtain the golden fleece for Jason. He bolsters Jason's deflated ego by assuring him that he will again become a hero with the fleece unfurled as his battle standard.

Medea comes out of her quarters and insists upon speaking with Jason alone. Creon does not like to leave Jason alone with Medea, but he relents and departs. Medea hopes that Jason has changed his mind about her exile and that he will not allow her to go alone. But Jason has not changed his mind, and once again Medea hurls spiteful accusations in his face. When Jason calls her a witch Medea counters with the reminder that Jason knew what she was like when he first wooed her. Jason blames his former passion on youth and Medea cries out:

> Oh, do not chide the golden years of youth
> When heads are hot but hearts are kind and good!

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1. F. Grillparzer, op. cit., Act III, 63.

Has bitter struggle for a hearth and home,
For name and fame quite deadened in your heart
The lovely blossoms on the tree of youth?
Oh, full of pain and torment though I be,
I oft recall that happy time of spring
And tender breezes blow across the years.
If then you thought Medea fair and dear,
How is she grown so loathsome and repugnant?[1]

Jason replies wearily that youth is gone and along with it his zest for adventure. He cannot go with her; she must go alone and without the children:

Their father's name they bear before the world
And Jason's name shall not barbarian's grace.
Here will I rear them where Greek customs thrive.[2]

Medea cries out against the injustice of his decision, and he finally consents to allow one child to accompany her. Her words of thanks are barbed with sarcasm but she has no choice but to take what is given her. The King returns, and at his bidding Creusa brings in the children who are to decide between them who will go with Medea. Creusa comments on her fondness for the boys and the affection they have shown her. We are prepared for the next punishing stroke that is to crush Medea's spirit, and as she asks the boys to choose we look on compassionately.

Neither of her sons will leave Creusa, and Medea, blind with rage and humiliation, lets loose a torrent of epithets:

You wicked, evil boys!
Your mother's curse, your father's very image!

Now come to me!-To me!-Oh, viper brood![3]

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1. F. Grillparzer, op. cit., Act III p. 76.
2. Ibid., p. 81.
3. Ibid., p. 85.

The children, frightened by her behavior, hang even more tightly to Creusa's skirts, and will not budge. Jason brusquely tells Medea to leave, but Creon, moved to pity, says to Creusa:

> Go with them to the house,
> For her who bore them they must not feel hate.[1]

As the King and his party leave, Gora rushes to Medea's side, cautioning her not to break down before the enemy. But Medea will not be comforted and flinging herself on the ground cries out:

> I am destroyed, defeated, downtrodden.
> They flee me, flee!
> My children flee![2]

The catastrophe of Medea occurs in Act Four as circumstances weave an inescapable net around Medea and compel her to kill her children. They have become traitors in her mind, and she rejects them also because Jason is their father. Her logic here follows the familiar pattern of preceding plays as she decides that if she must be childless so shall Jason.

But to complete her vengeance she must have recourse to her store of magic; Creon gives her the opportunity. He has found the buried chest, and suspecting that it contains the golden fleece he has it brought to her. He orders her to send the fleece to Creusa, and Medea is quick to comply. She also chooses a robe and the chalice of fire to add to the gift, sending the unsuspecting Gora to deliver them.

In the meantime a slave has brought Medea's children to her so that she may say goodby to them. The boys do not wish

1. F. Grillparzer, op. cit., Act III, p. 87.
2. Ibid., p. 87.

to remain, and one says anxiously:

> You wish to put us on your ship again
> Where we were dizzy, sick. But we'll stay here.
> Yes, brother?[1]

The younger boy adds:

> One day you knocked me down because I'm like
> My father, yet he loves me best for that.
> I'll stay with him and with the gentle lady![2]

Their thoughtless, unkind words cut deeply, but Medea speaks kindly and tells them to lie down when they complain of being sleepy. Knowing that she will soon kill them, she sits quietly opposite the boys, her heart suddenly constricting in sorrow. The stage darkens as evening falls, and Medea delivers a long soliloquy. This passage is very Euripidean in its tone, containing the pathos, philosophical sadness, and lyric quality so noticeable in the Greek dramatist's Medea. Medea says softly:

> The night is come, the stars ascend the sky
> And shed their mild and gentle light upon us;
> The same today as they were yesterday;
> As though all things today were as before;
> Whereas between, as great a gulf is fixed
> As that which lies twixt joy and utter ruin:
> So changeless, ever stable, Nature is;
> So full of chance is man, his life and doom.[3]

She recalls her happy days in Colchis, but memories also revive painful thoughts of murder and crime. She becomes frightened, and running to the boys, holds them close against her breast. Tenderness for them overwhelms her, and she sends them inside for safety. For a moment she forgets her decision to kill her own flesh and blood--until she remembers the deadly

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1. F. Grillparzer, op. cit., Act IV, p. 103.
2. Ibid., p. 104.
3. Ibid., p. 105.

chalice and:

> When tomorrow's sun arises,
> I shall stand alone,
> The world a mere barren desert,
> Robbed of children, robbed of my mate,
> On wounded and bleeding feet
> Wandering to exile.-Where to?
> They will rejoice at my plight and laugh at me!
> Both my children won over to strangers,
> Alienated, forever far.
> That must not be![1]

Gora rushes in at this moment with news that confirms Medea's decision. Creusa is dead. Medea hurries into her house, and we now hear the horrified voices of Creon and Jason calling from the rear. The act ends as Medea appears at the entrance of the colonnade with hands uplifted, a dagger in one hand.

The last act begins just twenty-four hours after the opening action of the play. The palace is in blackened ruins, and the stage is filled with shocked Corinthians moving about examining the results of the fire. Creon has Gora before him, but she denies having had knowledge of Medea's scheme. Gora, however, feels no regret for Creusa's death; her concern is all for the dead children:

> I weep for these my children, my beloved,
> Whom I saw dead, slain by their mother's hand.
> I would that all of you lay in your graves
> With him, that traitor Jason, at your side;[2]

A slave who witnessed Creusa's fiery end starts to describe the scene to Creon, but he stops her, not wishing to re-live the horror of her death. Jason appears with drawn sword, looking for Medea. Gora says to both the wild-eyed Jason and to Creon:

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1. F. Grillparzer, op. cit., Act IV, p. 107.
2. Ibid., Act V, p. 111.

> Leave me, leave others to condemn her deed,
> The two of you met but your just deserts.
> The Colchian woman you will mock no more.[1]

Gora is escorted off-stage, and when she has gone Creon turns to Jason and banishes him from his kingdom. Jason leaves but says sorrowfully:

> My head is bleeding, bruised by falling brands!
> What no one speaks? No leader, no companion?
> None follows me whom once so many followed?[2]

The scene now changes to a "wild, lonely region surrounded by forest and by crags with a peasant's hut.[3] Jason stumbles in, torn and bleeding, and asks the peasant for a drink of water. The peasant shuts his door in Jason's face, and the former hero sinks to the ground, his strength gone. From behind a crag Medea steps dramatically and stands before Jason with the golden fleece flung over her shoulder. Jason has not the strength to harm her but accuses her of being without human feeling. Medea replies sadly:

> And were my heart not still as undisclosed
> To you as always, you would see the pain
> Whose endless waves like breaking seas roll in
> And swallow up the ruins of my grief
> To sweep them, wrapped in horrors and destruction,
> Upnn a course that knows no bound nor bourne.
> I grieve not that my children live no more;
> I grieve they ever lived and we live still.[4]

Medea then gives a farewell speech, a speech that echoes with the fatalistic, resigned philosophy of Grillparzer. She says to Jason:

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1. F. Grillparzer, op. cit., Act V, p. 114.
2. Ibid., p. 115.
3. F. Grillparzer, op. cit., stage directions, p. 116.
4. Ibid., Act V, p. 118.

A life of sorrow dawns for you this day.
Yet whatsoever comes, hold firm!
Be stronger in enduring than in action.
If woe lead you toward death, then think on me
And find your solace in my greater sorrow,
Of one who did the deeds you left undone.
I go my way and bear my monstrous grief
Forever with me through the endless world.[1]

Medea plans to go to Delphi and to offer the fleece in partial atonement for her sins. The Gods shall decide her fate, her future paths of exile. She holds the fleece toward Jason and adds:

Behold and see the prize for which you strove,
Which was to bring you happiness and fame!
What is our happiness on earth?-A shadow!
What is the fame of earth?-A dream!
Poor man! Of naught but shadows you have dreamed!
The dream is ended, but the night not yet.[2]

Medea does not leave in a winged chariot; she merely walks away into the forest saying:

I go; and you shall never see me more![3]

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1. F. Grillparzer, op. cit.,Act V, p. 119.
2. Ibid., p. pp. 119-120.
3. Ibid., p. 120.

3. Criticism and Comment

Medea's attitude toward her new environment is revealed in her first speech:

> The dark of night, of conjury is past;
> And what will happen, whether good or evil,
> Must happen in the open light of day.[1]

Grillparzer strikes the dominant chord of the play at the very beginning in his delineation of Medea. She wishes to bury the past and to begin a new life, conforming to the strange ways of her new home:

> What was at home deemed just they here call unjust,
> What we thought right they here pursue with hate;
> So let us then as well change speech and customs;
> If we may be no longer what we would,
> So let us then at least be what we can.[2]

Euripides' Medea was conscious of her position as a barbarian but resented the superior attitude of the Greeks. In Grillparzer's play we find a woman eager to please and to learn new ways. Her desire for approval subjugates her true personality, and she becomes meek and submissive, even childish. She does not have the fire, the magnificent spirit of Euripides' heroine. She reminds Creusa that she too was once a princess, but her speech is apologetic in tone instead of fiercely proud:

> Oh, draw not back! This is no leper's hand.
> A royal princess I was born like you.
>
> ———————
>
> As you stand by me, fair and bright and radiant,
> So I once stood, I too, beside my father,
> His idol and the idol of my folk.
> Oh Colchis, you, oh my ancestral land!
> They call you dark, in my eyes you seem bright.[3]

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1. F. Grillparzer, op. cit., Act I, p. 6.
2. Ibid., p. 12.
3. Ibid., p. 27.

Medea begins to lose heart as the play progresses and as the hopelessness of burying the past becomes apparent. Jason, instead of encouraging her, is disparaging and is ruthless in his contempt for her pitiful effort to sing. The herald's announcement, Jason's betrothal to Creusa, and the rejection of her children follow relentlessly one after another, and Medea finds herself pushed against a stone wall. Then she begins to fight back and forgetting the customs of the new land resorts to the only weapon left at her disposal--revenge. We are reminded of Euripides' portrayal as Medea cries out:

> They called me cruel, wicked: I was not;
> But I now feel how one may learn to be,
> A frightful thing takes form within my breast,
> I shudder-yet rejoice thereat as well.--
> When once the deed is finished, done----[1]

Grillparzer justifies Medea's vengeance and the murder of her children in much the same way as did Euripides. Jealousy, fear, and the deep wound of repudiation gnaw at her heart. She is caged in by frustration and strikes back like a wild, hurt animal.

The Medea of the last act has been purged through suffering and emerges with dignity and quiet resignation to what fate has in store. Her soul has been purified, and as she faces the future, saddened but unafraid, she says to the weaker Jason:

> Farewell. For all the joys of earlier days,
> In all the grief that shrouds us darkly now,
> Through all the sorrow threatening still to come,
> I say farewell to you, my husband.[2]

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1. F. Grillparzer, op. cit., Act IV, p. 93.
2. Ibid., Act V, p. 119.

Grillparzer's characterization of Jason is very similar to Euripides' conception of an aggressive materialist. Euripides' strokes are sharp and cleanly etched; Grillparzer's touches are softer and less distinct. But his brush, sweeping across the canvas, actually includes more color and paints a larger picture of Jason. One corner of the portrait illustrates his insufferable complacency:

> You love me. That I cannot doubt, Medea;
> In your own way, of course, but still you love me.
> Your glances tell me, also many a deed.[1]

Jason appears in a more sympathetic light when he tries to make Creon understand his alliance with Medea in Colchis:

> The day is night there and the night a horror,
> The people grimmer even than the night.
> There I found her so monstrous in your eyes;
> I tell you, she was like the ray of sun
> That shines through fissures in a prison cell.
> Dark though she here appear, she there seemed light,
> Against the gloom of night that hovered around her.[2]

The tragic note of the whole story is sounded in this speech, a note that is universal and modern in its significance. Jason, the adventurer, or the soldier of more modern times, becomes infatuated with a woman who appears as radiant as the sun in far-away lands. He finds himself in a different world, and home fades into the past like the disappearing shore. But the adventure ended, the long forgotten native land once more reached, he turns to look at his foreign bride and sees a stranger, a barbarian.

Jason, although reckless and daring as a youth, is weak

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1. F. Grillparzer, op. cit., Act I, p. 18.
2. Ibid., p. 30.

in moral fibre. Good fortune finds him arrogant, selfish, ready for action. Misfortune wrings from his this petulant cry:

> Why did you make, oh gods, so fair my morning
> When you appointed me so dark an eve?[1]

He shows little sympathy for the suffering of others but is concerned only with his unhappiness. And instead of facing the present he gropes blindly for the past:

> A habit this
> Which clings from early youth and mocks me now,
> That I am often fain to dream, and babble
> Of things that are not and can never be.[2]

Jason, spoiled as a young man by the adulation of hero-worshipping crowds, has no spiritual reservoir to draw from in facing the cold silence of his former friends. He complains in a childish whimper:

> One man spoke up and called my manners rude
> For standing still and blocking people's way.[3]

Medea rises above suffering, but Jason is completely bowed by it. As Medea leaves him, urging him to atone and to endure, we are skeptical of his ability to recover and to go on living. Medea realizes that her crime began in Colchis when she first desired the golden fleece and that her fall was inevitable. She did not resist the forces of evil and eventually became an agent of evil. Jason's crime is expressed in his own words, but he does not thoroughly understand them:

> I have done naught that in itself was bad,
> Yet purposed, wanted, wished and striven much,
> Looked on in silence when another erred;[4]

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1. F. Grillparzer, op. cit., Act II, p. 39.
2. Ibid., p. 47.
3. Ibid., p. 44.
4. Ibid., p. 43.

Between Jason and Medea stands Creusa, tempting one and contrasting the other. Grillparzer is the first dramatist to use Creusa for such dramatic effect. Medea's inadequacies in appearance and nature are emphasized by Creusa's attributes. Medea says to her wistfully:

> Your heart is like your garments, clean and pure.
> As though you were a milk-white dove, you soar
> On outspread wings, above this sordid life,
> And soil no feather in the filthy mire,
> In which we, worn by struggle, live and move.[1]

When Jason openly prefers Creusa to Medea, and the children also succumb to her gentle ways, Medea's harmless envy turns to vindictive jealousy. Just before she kills the children she says:

> Your days are done, snow-white bride?
> And still would you entice my children?
> Charm them still? Charm them still?[2]

Grillparzer subtly suggests the difference in color of skin, a difference which becomes the thesis of Maxwell Anderson's tragedy.

Creon's characterization is not distinctive, but Gora stands out in all her appearances. She is intensely proud of her Colchian blood, resentful of servitude, and savagely opposed to Jason and all Greeks. Grillparzer does not stress the love of Jason and Medea for their children; but Gora is as possessive and loyal in her regard for their welfare as the most fiercely loving mother.

The children are portrayed more realistically in Grillparzer's

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1. F. Grillparzer, op. cit., Act II, p. 39.
2. Ibid., Act IV, p. 108.

Medea than in any of the preceding plays and are more important to the plot. Their dialogue expresses well the inconsequential fears that haunt a child's mind and the thoughtless cruelty of children. And it is their rejection of Medea that makes disaster inevitable.

Franz Grillparzer's Medea is a powerful, moving tragedy, with sustained action and good characterization. It resembles Euripides' play in many respects and of all the Medea plays that I have read comes closest to capturing the richness of Greek tragedy. Grillparzer, however, allows his fondness for plot complications and dramatic situations to detract from concentration on character and does not attain the dramatic simplicity of Euripides' style.

His verse is rich, imaginative, and sensuous, rising at times to a majestic, philosophic elevation of thought. At other times Grillparzer blurs the meaning and destroys the beauty of his poetry with terse, elliptical lines.

The symbol of the golden fleece is made a visible object in his Medea and is a constant reminder of the cupidity of human nature and the helplessness of individuals who allow themselves to be swept into paths that lead to self-perpetuating evil.

VII. ERNEST LEGOUVÉ

1. His Life and Age; Nineteenth Century French Drama

By the time of the Napoleonic era French dramatic literature had sunk into desolating, dreary monotony.[1] The official theatre was still judging plays according to fixed rules laid down by the French Academy, and all life was slowly being choked out of the drama.

By the end of the first quarter of the nineteenth century the time was ripe for revolt. A new, restless generation, born in the thick of the Napoleonic wars, grew up and refused to adhere to the rigid restraints of classicism. A national vaudeville was being revived by Eugène Scribe,[2] and the import of German melodrama and Shakespearean tragedy gave impetus to a fresh, virile movement. This new movement was called romanticism, and at its helm was Victor Hugo. The flare-up of romanticism was exciting, turbulent, but brief. Hugo died in 1885, and the romantic movement went with him to his grave.

Ernest Legouvé was born in 1807 in the midst of Napoleon's powerful bid for world sovereignty. He was the son of a poet, Jean Baptiste Legouvé, who was committed to an insane asylum before Ernest grew into manhood. The boy was well provided for,

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1. Brander Matthews, French Dramatists of the Nineteenth Century, p. 2.
2. Ibid., p. 2.

however, and obtained a good education.

He devoted his whole life to education, eventually becoming director of studies in a normal school for women at Sèvres. He did not obtain recognition in the field of drama until 1849 when he wrote Adrienne Lecouvreur in collaboration with Scribe, a well known playwright. All of his most successful plays were written with Scribe as a partner, and together they made a better play than either could have produced alone. Scribe had far more real ability, but he was not as thoroughly steeped in the classics as was Legouve. "In the plays Scribe wrote with Legouvé there is more life, and less insufficiency of style, than in his other pieces."[1]

The dramas which Legouvé wrote independently are insignificant except for Medée. This play was written in 1855 and led to the dramatist's election to the French Academy.[2] The famous French actress, Rachel, turned down this tragedy, however, and considered it so inappropriate a vehicle that she paid five thousand francs to Legouvé rather than play in it.[3] Despite its faults Madame Ristori and her Italian dramatic company made a rather successful world tour with Medée, using an Italian translation.

Toward the end of his life Legouvé devoted more and more time to lecturing on women's rights and the education of children in France. He was intensely interested in bettering the

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1. B. Matthews, op. cit., pp. 97-98.
2. -------Encyclopaedia Britannica, Vol. 13, p. 880.
3. -------New International Encyclopaedia, Second Edition, Vol. XIII, p. 737.

social position of women and was for many years inspector-general of female education. Unfortunately, Legouvé did not see the possibilities of stating the cause of womankind in his Medea play and unlike Euripides does not use this thesis for his main conflict.

The aging playwright and educator published his autobiography, Soixante Ans de Souvenirs, from 1886-1887 and died a few years later on March 14, 1903.

2. Criticism of Medée

Legouve's tragedy contains only three acts, and its scenes are determined by the entrances and exits of characters. The action seems to cover one day as in previous plays although the dramatist is not too exact as to the time element.

In the first scene we meet a character not previously portrayed in a Medea play. Orpheus, the famed singer of the Argonauts, has arrived in Corinth and is greeted hospitably by Creon and the citizens of Corinth. Jason is present but receives Orpheus coldly, resenting the attention given to a mere poet. Creon mollifies the injured feelings of Jason, praising him for his courageous deeds, deeds which he has rewarded by blessing the betrothal of his daughter Creusa to the renowned hero. Creon is worried, however, by the anger of the Gods, who do not seem to approve of the coming marriage. He hopes that the music of Orpheus will soothe their ruffled spirits.

Later Orpheus accosts Jason alone and accuses him of abandoning his former wife, Medea. Jason retorts that he left Medea because:

> I can no longer, at Medea's side,
> Brave the hatred--the horror of the world!
> No! I'll no more of her.[1]

Orpheus upbraids Jason for his behavior, reminding him that he owes his life to Medea and that he persuaded her to leave Colchis against her will. Jason claims that his overpowering love for Creusa is sufficient reason for not returning

1. Ernest Legouvé, Medée, translated from Italian version of Joseph Montanelli by Thomas Williams, ActI, Sc.ii p.5.

to Medea. Orpheus threatens to use his influence to prevent the marriage, but Jason is confident that Creon will support him because of his valor in ridding Corinth of dreadful monsters and serpents.

In the midst of the pre-marital festivities Medea appears in Corinth with her two children but is unattended by a nurse or other companions. Medea seeks her long lost husband, unaware that he has succumbed to the charms of another woman. Ironically, the first person whom she encounters is Creusa. The two women converse at length not realizing the significance of their meeting. Up until now the action has moved slowly, but Legouvé injects new life into his play in this unique scene.

Medea blurts out her troubles to Creusa, telling her the now familiar tale of Jason's infidelity. But she does not name the faithless husband and Creusa, confiding to Medea that she too has felt the pangs of love, listens sympathetically to her sad story. The appearance of Orpheus touches off the first explosion as the awful truth dawns upon the two women. The act ends on a note of intensity as Medea reviles the equally aroused Creusa.

Jason returns from a very successful expedition against another giant expecting a triumphant reception in his honor. Instead he discovers that Medea has reached Corinth and that because of Orpheus' interference Creon has called off the wedding. Jason will not accept the King's decision and threatens to spread terror in the kingdom. Medea storms into the palace

during Jason's outburst and faces her errant husband. Creon quietly leaves with his attendants, and Legouvé then presents his version of the famous scene between the wronged woman and her indignant husband.

Jason makes a feeble attempt to convince Medea that a dissolution of their union will be beneficial to all parties concerned, particularly the children. He hastens to assure Medea that she will be provided with a ship laden with treasure. Her skeptical, lofty reply is:

> Reflect now--ere thou entrusteth the good ship
> to the winds,
> Recall some solitary spot, some remote shore,
> Wherein I am not cursed for what I did for thee,
> Or where we are not execrated for some mutual crime![1]

This argument is an echo of similar speeches in plays that precede Legouvé's Medée, but is not so well expressed in this scene. Medea continues to rebuff Jason's efforts to justify his behavior accusing him of purely selfish motives. She guesses shrewdly that Creon has refused to allow the wedding to take place unless she consents. Medea informs Jason that she is determined to oppose him in every way because:

> Think'st thou that souls united by so dire a curse
> Can seek for love elsewhere than in themselves?[2]

Legouvé's Jason has difficulty controlling his temper and once again loses it. He warns Medea that he will have his way and that her stubbornness will only bring misfortune upon herself and the children.

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1. E. Legouvé, op. cit., Act II, Sc. iii, p. 19.
2. Ibid., p. 20.

In the next scene Medea rants and raves in Senecan fashion, and as her fury mounts so does her jealousy of Creusa. Visualizing her death she shrieks ecstatically in anticipation of the deed. Creusa appears hurriedly in the midst of Medea's demoniacal performance to save her from the angry mob of Corinthians. Medea calms down and throwing herself upon the mercy of the princess asks her to give up Jason so that he will return to his wife and children. Creusa refuses this request saying unhappily that her love for Jason is too strong. Medea breaks out again into a fit of anger just as Creon, Jason, and others rush in. The King suspects from Creusa's frightened look that Medea has threatened her and immediately banishes the Colchian stranger from his kingdom. Medea's stubbornness affronts the Corinthians present, and they are kept from stoning her only by the timely entrance of Orpheus. Medea is now determined to carry out her vengeance.

In the last act Medea plans and carries out her strategy. She pretends to submit willingly to her exile and to consent to Jason's marriage to Creusa, knowing all the while that Creusa's wedding veil, poisoned and sent as a gift by Medea, will end the life of the new bride. Orpheus continues to oppose the marriage fearing some horrible disaster will come of this injustice to Medea.

Creon had given Medea one day in Corinth before his decree was to take effect. But a sudden revelation from the Gods, boding evil, changes his mind, and he orders her to leave im-

mediately. Medea, although previously consenting to leave the children behind, now demands that she be allowed to take them with her.

The scene that follows, in which the children are to choose between them to decide who will accompany their mother, is very similar to Grillparzer's rejection scene. Medea tells the boys to choose and is heartbroken when neither wishes to go with her. She does not, however, take out her anger and humiliation on the boys and is tolerant of their reluctance. One child finally runs to her side realizing that it his duty to do so, and Medea says sadly:

> I blame him not; he's young, hath suffered much,
> And is of misery weary.[1]

She blames Creusa and says bitterly:

> What care I now to take them with me?
> Their steps will follow me, their heart,
> Their love remain with thee!
> They're no longer my sons, they are thine![2]

Medea falls sobbing at the foot of a statue, and Orpheus advises everyone to leave her alone for a while. There follows a long, angry tirade by Medea reminiscent of Seneca's heroine. She becomes hysterical, wild and inhuman, crying out:

> O gods of hell assist me---
> As yet I scarce know what I'd do;
> But I am resolved that some hideous crime
> Throughout this terrified land, shall shroud me
> In a veil of horror stained with blood![3]

Creusa's fate is sealed; Medea feels she must deal a more

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1. E. Legouvé, op. cit., Act III, Sc. v, p. 31.
2. Ibid., p. 31.
3. Ibid., Sc. vi, p. 32.

ghastly blow against the heart of the faithless Jason and now thinks of her children. They too must die. As in the previous plays her conscience rises to the surface to weaken her determination, and she falters. At this crucial moment the boys are brought to her for solace, and at sight of them her heart crumbles. She embraces them, and as she kneels at their side Orpheus comes in to urge her to leave taking the children with her. Before she can slip away a crowd surges in bewailing the death of Creusa and demanding the life of the murderess who has outraged their land.

Orpheus is horrified by what Medea has done and attempts to take the children from her. Creon has entered in the meantime and rushes toward her. We hear two plaintive cries, and a dreadful hush falls over the stage as Medea is seen standing at the foot of a statue with a knife reeking of blood in one hand. She has murdered the children.

Jason pushes into the crowd at this moment and stops aghast as he sees the dead bodies of his two children. Medea, as in Grillparzer's play, does not escape in a chariot; she does not even leave the stage in Legouvé's ending but merely jumps forward and points an accusing finger at Jason. He has demanded to know who killed his children and Medea, staring wildly into his eyes, says:

Thou![1]

Legouvé's Medée is a weak retelling of the Greek legend. The dramatist brings in all the elements that are needed to

1. E. Legouvé, op. cit., Act III, Sc. ix, p. 35.

build up a mood of suspense and tragic conflict but fails to concentrate on any one feature. His story is just a hodge podge of situations that lacks force or reality. His scenes do not link together in a logical, dramatic pattern but seem disconnected and jerky.

Episodes in which characters exhibit great feeling or emotion invariably turn into melodramatic passages of incoherent hysterics. These scenes are merely poor imitations of Senecan verse.

An atmosphere of tragic foreboding is given by the very artificial device of dragging in a statue of Saturn with this comment by Orpheus:

> 'Tis he to whom the blood of new-born babes
> Is a most grateful offering; 'tis he who
> Knows no sweeter sacrifice than children
> Slaughtered by their mother's hand!
> A gloomy witness this of nuptial rites![1]

Legouvé's one effective innovation is his treatment of the first meeting between Medea and Creusa. He succeeds in holding our interest here because of the dramatic irony of a situation in which two women face each other without knowing that they are rivals for the love of the same man. The scene in which Medea is humiliated by her children is somewhat similar to Grillparzer's idea but not so well concocted. Legouvé fails to put over the pathos of Medea's injured feelings, and our sympathy is forced instead of freely given.

The introduction of Orpheus makes little sense except to take the place of a chorus. His sympathetic but unprejudiced

1.E. Legouvé, op. cit., Act III, Sc. ii, p. 25.

attitude toward Medea is a barometer to sudience reaction but is a poor substitute for Euripides' chorus.

The characterization of Creon is very weak; he is portrayed as a just King but certainly a most ineffectual one. Creusa makes more of an impression than her father. Her refusal to relinquish her hold on Jason suggests more human, realistic traits of character and is different from the faultless behavior of Grillparzer's Creusa.

The children are not strongly felt personalities, but at times they remind us that they have some of Medea's spirit. Jason, commenting on the boy's affection for Creusa, says that they are frightened by their mother. But one boy speaks up quickly:

> I said not that.[1]

Jason is the most finely drawn of all Legouvé's characters. His childish, petty nature is brought out well at the very beginning when he sulks because of attention paid to Orpheus. His juvenile love for Creusa is illustrated by this petulant statement:

> I love her! Dost thou understand the word?
> I love her! And no living soul, not e'en her father,
> Shall separate our destinies![2]

He is an immature, selfish braggart who tires of Medea when she ceases to flatter his ego and then looks for a new toy. But to do him justice there are times when he shows a more stable, serious outlook. His most sincere alibi is:

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1. E. Legouvé, op. cit., Act III, Sc. ii, p. 28.
2. Ibid., Act II, Sc. ii, p. 17.

And that if saved by her means from impending death,
My name is now immortal
My shame is e'en so too![1]

Later he says soberly:

In 'scaping from this dark and gloomy passion,
I seem to rise at once towards life and day!--
I feel myself a man, a husband, friend and father!
In short, I live again![2]

Our last impression of him is very weak. He seems ridiculous as he shrieks:

My sons? Dead? Ye, too? What both?
O Horror. My children? Who has killed them?[3]

Legouvé's Medea is the least impressive of all the heroines we have met in our perusal of the plays. Her physical appearance is made known, but delineation of her inner soul is merely superficial. Creusa says of her:

How stately are her accents--her brow how regal!
A queen in exile one might almost deem her![4]

But except for infrequent demonstrations of queen-like behavior she seems emotionally unstable and erratic. Her soliloquies usually rise in crescende to a pitch of madness, and all dramatic effect is lost.

Legouvé makes casual reference to Medea's affection for her children, her love for Jason, and her jealousy of Creusa. We are told that she formerly lived in a country considered to be barbarian by the Corinthians, and that she is endowed with supernatural powers. The dramatist fails to stress the

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1. E. Legouvé, op. cit., Act III, Sc. 1, p. 26.
2. Ibid., p. 26.
3. Ibid., Act III Sc. lx, p. 33.
4. Ibid., Act I, Sc. vi, p. 10.

importance of any one fact, however, and so none of them seem important.

Ernest Legouvé's Medée is an illustration of how a magnificent story can be spoiled by a trite, melodramatic, over-theatrical treatment. Seneca was the first dramatist to begin this enervating process, and Legouvé finishes it with his inferior rendering of the Greek myth.

VIII. HENRIK IBSEN

1. His Life and Drama

Henrik Ibsen was born in 1828 in Skien, a small coastal town in Norway. His father, a prosperous merchant, suffered heavy financial losses when Henrik was a small boy, and the Ibsens were forced to live in poverty in a little farmhouse outside of town. The experience of these years, which included ostracization from respectable society, embittered Ibsen all his life and fostered in him a belligerence against the bourgeois caste and its stifling atmosphere.[1]

He was apprenticed to an apothecary as a young boy and became interested in the study of medicine. A talent for writing sidetracked him from his scientific career and led him into the field of journalism and playwriting. His journalistic activities provided wide scope for his radical views on social reform, but he lost his enthusiasm when the editor of the revolutionary labor paper for which he wrote was arrested and imprisoned.[2] Fortunately for Ibsen and for world drama, the young journalist attracted the attention of Ole Bull just about this time.

Although Norway obtained her freedom from Denmark in 1814,

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1. Harlan Hatcher, Modern Continental Dramas., Intro. to Hedda Garbler, p. 3.
2. William S. Clark, Chief Patterns of World Drama, Intro. to Hedda Garbler, p. 725.

Danish culture continued to dominate Norwegian life for many years. Ole Bull led a movement to establish a distinctive Norwegian culture and literature. He founded a national theatre at Bergen in 1850 and a year later made the acquaintance of Ibsen. Ole Bull was impressed by his dramatic talent and appointed him theatre-poet and stage manager of his theatre.

The young dramatist took his duties very seriously and spent some time in Copenhagen and in Germany studying dramatic art. He produced another successful play in 1856, became director of the Norwegian theatre of Christiania in 1857, and in 1858 married the daughter of a Bergen minister.

His theatre went into bankruptcy in 1862, and Ibsen petitioned for a poet's pension. He became impatient with the delays that held up his pension and left for the continent before it could be granted. Ibsen's voluntary exile continued for twenty-seven years, and except for brief vacation visits back to Norway, he lived abroad in Rome, Dresden, and Munich. All of his famous plays, from Brand to Hedda Gabler, were written outside his native land.

Henrik Ibsen was known throughout the world when he finally returned to Norway in 1891. His plays had aroused all of Europe, England, and America, but the great dramatist remained unperturbed by the controversial whirlpool that eddied around him. He settled in Christiania and died there on May 23, 1906.

The romantic, realistic, and symbolic periods of Ibsen's playwriting paralleled a similar evolution of European drama

in the second half of the nineteenth century.[1] The plays that made Ibsen the founder of "modern drama" were his social problem plays, the second phase of his dramatic art. Scribe and Dumas had already set the currents in motion, and Ibsen now made the theatre a platform for the discussion of all sorts of problems that kept pressing in upon the complacency of the prosperous, mercantile world of Ibsen's day.[2]

A Doll's House belongs in this group, and like Euripides' Medea, caused a minor revolution in contemporary society. It was written in 1879 in the midst of an upheaval caused by agitation for the emancipation of women. A Doll's House was so closely associated with the feminist movement that many seemed to think it had caused the furor over women's rights. It now seems outdated, but its message was taken so seriously at the end of the century that England and America would not permit a production in the complete original version.[3]

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1. W. S. Clark, op. cit., p. 727.
2. H. Hatcher, op. cit., pp. 4-5.
3. W. S. Clark, op. cit., p. 726.

2. A Doll's House; Echoes from Euripides' Medea

The laws and customs of society change very slowly. Tremendous strides are made in the world of science, but in the world of man progress is hardly perceptible from one age to another. In over two thousand years the position of women had changed so little that Henrik Ibsen electrified his society in much the same way and for the same reason that Euripides had shocked his fellow Athenians. A Doll's House has no similarity to the adventures of Jason and Medea, but there is a remarkable likeness in the dramatists' attitude toward the place of women in contemporary society. Ibsen's impassioned defense of the right of women to be emancipated from the petty mores that shackle them to their homes can be compared to Euripides' keen analysis of this age-old problem.

A Doll's House is the story of a woman and her husband and of a relationahip that destroys their marriage. Torvald Helmer and his wife Nora have been married for eight years and have three lovely children. Their home is like a doll house, and Nora is the doll wife. Her whole existence consists of pleasing her husband, and in return he fondles and protects her, as Nora's father did before she married. The peace and security of their home is destroyed at Christmas time when Torvald discovers that Nora once forged her father's signature in order to borrow money. The money had been used for a trip to Italy so that Torvald, seriously ill but not aware of it, could regain his health.

Nora expects Torvald to accept her crime manfully, taking

full responsibility on his broad shoulders. Instead he behaves badly and is determined to hush up the matter to save his precious reputation. The jolt of Torvald's cowardice snaps Nora out of her childlike existence and brings her face to face with reality. She realizes that she has not been a person but a doll; she knows nothing of life nor of the rules that govern society; she has lived with a stranger for eight years and borne him children, but there has been no real marriage. She explains all this to Torvald, very calmly and quietly, and then leaves, closing the door behind her as she goes out. She is going out into the world to educate herself, and only a miracle will bring her back to her husband and children.

This brief resume of A Doll's House is very different from the plot of Medea. But when we examine the main characters of both plays we discover a similar chain of events governing their lives and a similar treatment of character given by the dramatist. Keeping in mind Euripides' Medea let us turn to A Doll's House.

Love for Jason led Medea to save his life and to commit murder for him. When she is forced to forfeit her love, when Jason betrays her trust in him, her world is shattered. Nora's blind devotion to Torvald likewise filled her whole life and governed her every action. Her excuse to Torvald after he discovers her crime is:

> It is true. I have loved you beyond all else in the world.[1]

When Torvald became ill shortly after their marriage she

1. Henrik Ibsen, The Collected Works of Henrik Ibsen, A Doll's House, Act III, p. 135.

was willing to risk anything to restore his health. With pride she says to Christina, a girlhood friend:

> He said I was frivolous, and that it was his duty as a husband not to yield to my whims and fancies--so he called them. Very well, thought I, but saved you must be; and then I found the way to do it.[1]

Nora's determination and courage in adversity equals Medea's resourcefulness, and both women break the law in order to protect their husbands. Medea's crime is murder, but according to her barbaric code of ethics her action is justified. Nora's offense is equally harmless in her eyes:

> Do you mean to tell me that a daughter has no right to spare her dying father trouble and anxiety?--that a wife has no right to save her husband's life? I don't know much about the law, but I'm sure you'll find, somewhere or another, that that is allowed.[2]

Nora is not a foreigner; she has not been brought up in an uncivilized country with laws different from those of her husband's as had Medea. But she is as unfamiliar with the laws that govern her society as Medea is with the customs observed in Greece. Nora has been sheltered from life first by her father and then by Torvald; she has grown up ignorant of the man-made mores by which women, as well as men, are judged. Her reaction upon discovering the existence of these mores is:

> I hear, too, that the laws are different from what I thought; but I can't believe that they can be right----------I must make up my mind which is right--society or I.[3]

Torvald's failure to shoulder Nora's guilt and his moral

1. H. Ibsen, op. cit., Act I, p. 26.
2. Ibid., p. 53.
3. Ibid., Act III, p. 149.

inadequacy in a grave crisis affect Nora in the same way that Jason's infidelity reacted upon Medea. Everything for which she had lived loses meaning and value. Her marriage had been built on the illusion that Torvald's love for her could surmount all obstacles. Her willingness to build a life completely around Torvald at the expense of her own individuality stemmed from the firm belief that Torvald was her protector and that he would be a bulwark against any outside threat. The destruction of this illusion shocks Nora into asserting her independence.

Medea's emancipation is spectacular and horrifying. Nora's awakening is just as final but more restrained. Like Medea she asserts her individuality and throws off the shackles of motherhood. Torvald says:

> Before all else you are a wife and mother.[1]

Nora's spirited reply is:

> That I no longer believe. I believe that before all else I am a human being, just as much as you are--or at least that I should try to become one.[2]

Nora goes on to say in her defense:

> I lived by performing tricks for you, Torvald.---It is your fault that my life has come to nothing.[3]

She states her case as energetically as does Medea, who instead of performing tricks, performed miracles. Medea expresses a feeling of revulsion at having borne children to Jason. Nora also exclaims:

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1. H. Ibsen, op. cit., Act III, p. 147.
2. Ibid., p. 147.
3. Ibid., p. 144.

> It burst upon me that I had been living these eight years with a strange man, and had borne him three children.--Oh, I can't bear to think of it! I could tear myself to pieces![1]

Nora does not kill her children or escape in a winged chariot. The closing of the door, however, in a more subtle manner, is as effective and dramatic as the "deus ex machina" of Euripides. Nora's family ties have been as completely severed as if she had killed her children. Her revolt against society is as cataclysmic as Medea's revenge upon her enemies and leaves Torvald in a state similar to Jason's desolation.

Euripides and Ibsen depict their male heroes in such a similar manner that the roles of Jason and Torvald could be interchanged and still make sense. Their personality traits coincide so perfectly that one wonders if perhaps all specimens of the stronger sex could not fit into a Jason or Torvald mold.

Ibsen's hero shares Jason's firm conviction that a wife should be subservient to her husband and that women should accept without question a subordinate position in society. When Nora asks for praise because she has agreed to dance the tarantella for Torvald, he says:

> Good of you! To give in to your husband? Well, well, you little madcap, I know you didn't mean it.[2]

Torvald, like Jason, was insensitive to Nora's real needs and did not take the time to reach down into the inner recesses of her heart. Instead of understanding he gave her indulgence, and in place of love he bestowed upon her doting fondness. Most of his conversation with her consists of such foolish talk as:

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1. H. Ibsen, op. cit., Act III, p. 152.
2. Ibid., Act II, p. 72.

> Come, come, my little lark mustn't droop her wings like that. What? Is my squirrel in the sulks?[1]

Torvald prides himself on the protection and security he has given his wife, but when that security is threatened it is not of Nora but of Torvald that he thinks:

> You have destroyed my whole happiness. You have ruined my future.

> And for all this I have you to thank--you whom I have done nothing but pet and spoil during our married life. Do you understand now what you have done to me?[2]

When the dark hour is over Torvald still thinking of himself says:

> Yes, yes, it is so. I am saved! Nora, I am saved![3]

He is not aware that Nora once saved his life nor is he cognizant of all that she has done for him during their marriage. He prefers to think that Nora owes all to him, and she willingly plays along:

> --how painful and humiliating it would be for Torvald, with his manly self-respect, to know that he owed anything to me.[4]

Jason could not forget Medea's Colchian background and considered her home far beneath the country in which he was born. Torvald is also skeptical of Nora's upbringing, believing that she has inherited many weaknesses from her father. He chides her:

> You're a strange little being! Just like your father--always on the look-out for all

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1. H. Ibsen, op. cit., Act I, p. 6.
2. Ibid., Act III, pp. 136-137.
3. Ibid., p. 138.
4. Ibid., Act I, p. 27.

> the money you can lay your hands on;--Well, one must take you as you are. It's in the blood. Yes, Nora, that sort of thing is hereditary.[1]

Throughout the play he asserts his desire to shield Nora from danger, saying to her just before he reads the letter that plunges him into despair:

> Do you know, Nora, I often wish some danger might threaten you, that I might risk body and soul, and everything, everything, for your dear sake.[2]

But when that opportunity appears he fails miserably to live up to his boastful assertions. He calls Nora a criminal and shows no tolerance for her offense. Fear overwhelms him, and the jeopardy of his position at the bank is his only concern.

Torvald recovers his composure once the danger is past, but it is too late. Nora can be fooled no longer. He is stripped of the aura of perfection through which she had always regarded him, and the naked man that remains is pitifully weak. Illusion has fled and along with it has gone the love she once gave to him without question. Torvald's excuse is:

> I would gladly work for you day and night, Nora--bear sorrow and want for your sake. But no man sacrifices his honour, even for one he loves.[3]

Nora replies simply:

> Millions of women have done so.[4]

Torvald is stunned by Nora's decision to leave her home, husband, and children. Such an act is inconceivable to him.

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1. H. Ibsen, op. cit., Act I, pp.9-10.
2. Ibid., Act III, p. 133.
3. Ibid., p. 151.
4. Ibid., p. 151.

Her departure leaves him, like Jason, crushed and broken in spirit. Torvald cries out:

> Nora! Nora! Empty. She is gone.[1]

But there is hope for Torvald where there was none for Jason. Nora has told him that only a miracle can reunite them. "From below is heard the reverberation of a heavy door closing,"[2] and Torvald exclaims:

> Ah! The miracle of miracles----------?![3]

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1. H. Ibsen, op. cit., Act III, p. 156.
2. Ibid., from the stage directions, p. 156.
3. Ibid., Act III, p. 156.

IX. MAXWELL ANDERSON

1. His Life; The Rise of American Drama

The flowering of native American drama did not begin until the late nineteenth century. Touring English actors furnished colonial America with dramatic entertainment, and the first American playwrights merely copied successful foreign models. But the tremendous impact of Ibsen's drama, which had already revitalized the drama of Europe and England, was bound to be felt on American soil. At the beginning of the twentieth century the first seeds of a native drama were sown, and by 1915 the time was ripe for a rich, golden harvest.

The two men whose art was to establish the solid reputation of American drama were born in the same year. Eugene O'Neill first saw the light of day in a New York hotel[1] in October, 1888, and two months later Maxwell Anderson was born in a small town in northwestern Pennsylvania. His father was a Baptist minister, and the Anderson's changed their residence many times as the pastorates changed. They were living in North Dakota by the time young Anderson was ready to enter college, and in 1907 he was enrolled at the University of North Dakota. During his four years of college he was an

1. W. S. Clark, op. cit., Intro. to O'Neill's The Hairy Ape, pp. 1007.

active member of the Dakota Playmakers and received valuable training for the theatre.

Anderson, however, did not turn to playwriting as a way to earn a living for many years. He taught for two years, obtained his Master's degree from Stanford University, and then stepped into the field of journalism. Newspaper reporting eventually led to a position on a New York paper, and the literary atmosphere of the big city soon revived his interest in the drama.

His attempts to write prose dissatisfied him, and he rebelled against the prosaic realism of modern drama. He was fascinated by the poetic heritage handed down from ancient Greece, a heritage which had been rejected in his fast-moving age. He considered the best prose inferior to the best poetry; he wished "to mirror not what man does say but what he would say if he should express himself with beauty and nobility,.... not what man is, but what he dreams of being."[1]

Years of fruitful experimentation culminated in the hit production of Elizabeth the Queen (1930) with Alfred Lunt and Lynn Fontanne. During the next ten years he continued to write successful plays in his favorite medium, blank verse, and rose to a position of eminence in the American theatre.

It is not surprising that Anderson was drawn to the dignity of Greek tragedy, nor that he chose for adaptation the tragic story of Medea. Such a theme was well suited to

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1. W. S. Clark, op. cit., Intro. to Mary of Scotland, p. 1082.

his lofty poetic impulses and to his desire to exalt the noble spirit of man. His treatment of the Medea legend, The Wingless Victory, had its premiere at the National Theatre in Washington, D. C. on Tuesday night November 24, 1936. Katharine Cornell played the role of Oparre, and Walter Abel appeared in the part of Nathaniel.

2. The Wingless Victory

Maxwell Anderson's adaptation of the Medea legend departs from the usual treatment of this story, changing the time, the place, the names of the characters, and the plot. Within this new framework, however, can be found many resemblances to the Medea plays we have studied.

The action takes place in the seacoast town of Salem, Massachusetts in the winter and spring of 1880. Anderson builds his story around the return of Nathaniel McQueston, an adventurous sea captain, to his home in Salem. Nathaniel brings with him a Malayan wife and two small children, and the conflict of the play arises from the refusal of Nathaniel's family and the townspeople to accept his dark-skinned family.

The atmosphere of Salem is important in Anderson's interpretation to intensify the problem of racial prejudice, Nathaniel's older brother and mother representing the evil, malicious narrow-mindedness of the hidebound town. The dramatist blends the romantic strain of a love story with vituperative attacks on the hypocrisy of bigoted, humourless clergymen and of the tight-lipped church members who listen to their sermons on Sunday. Anderson is the first dramatist to allow the social motif to become more important than the story.

The first half of Act One is devoted to atmosphere, the atmosphere into which Nathaniel will come with his Malayan wife. We become acquainted with the Reverend Phineas McQueston, his mother, a brother, Ruel, and Faith Ingalls, a former sweet-

heart of the prodigal son now returning. A young seaman, Happy Penny, warns the family of Nathaniel's imminent arrival and of the family he brings with him. Phineas and Mrs. McQueston are piously vicious in their reception of the news, the shock of his family being cushioned by the fact that Nathaniel is returning with a cargo of valuable spices from the Far East. Family fortunes are at a dangerously low level, as Ruel is quick to point out, and Phineas is not one to underrate the value of monetary possessions.

Ruel does not share the family views on morality and religion and is considered a worthless, flippant wastrel by his mother and brother. He looks forward with sardonic amusement to Nathaniel's home-coming, pleased that the cast-iron respectability of the McQuestons will be questioned. Faith is very happy over the prospect of seeing Nathaniel again and does not "credit that absurd story about the blackamoor he's supposed to have married."[1]

The Wingless Victory begins in prose, but Anderson soon changes to blank verse to give a sense of excitement, of expectation to Nathaniel's arrival. Faith and Ruel go down to the wharf to meet Nathaniel, and a singing, happy throng of sailors bring him to the McQueston threshold.

Anderson's hero is a big, hearty man, sympathetically portrayed from the beginning. His welcome to his mother is warm and affectionate:

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1. Maxwell Anderson, The Wingless Victory, Act I, p. 15.

> ------if you knew how a man could long
> for a cool green coast, and maybe a cool green friend
> or two, left over from his youth. We never
> were much for kissing in this room but God,
> God how I'm glad to see you![1]

Nathaniel greets Phineas, Ruel, Faith, and Phineas' quiet wife, Venture in the same friendly way, obviously glad to be home. His good humor is short-lived, however, when Mrs. McQueston and Phineas voice their objections to the "black" woman he has brought home. Phineas shouts:

> Why are you here?
> you mate with some aborigine in a jungle,
> beget your children on her, and bring her here,
> to spread your baboon kisses on white women
> as if nothing had happened![2]

Nathaniel replies bitterly:

> These sitters at home
> that think their brain's the only brain there is
> and the rest's all outer darkness! Sending out
> your missionaries to civilizations so old
> and wise they laugh at your Jesus-myth! Believing
> that you're the chosen of Heaven because your skin's
> a half-shade lighter than others![3]

Anderson is more concerned here with a social message than with the development of plot, but Phineas' insulting remarks made clear the hostility that Nathaniel will confront. Mrs. McQueston submits to her son's demands that Oparre be accepted in the house, and Phineas glumly subsides. Faith and Ruel go off with Nathaniel to fetch his family, and the stage is empty for a few seconds as Phineas and Mrs. McQueston also leave to busy themselves about the house.

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1. Maxwell Anderson, The Wingless Victory, Act I, p. 27.
2. M. Anderson, op. cit., Act I, p. 32.
3. Ibid., p. 33.

A little girl about six years old skips into the living room dressed in Malayan costume, followed by a "tall, regal woman, with a noble and beautiful, though somewhat barbaric face.[1] They have come in by the back door, just missing Nathaniel and the others who were on their way to greet them. A Malay nurse also enters carrying a sleeping baby.

The beginning of Oparres's first speech is similar to the first appearance of Medea in Seneca's play:

> Dark oracles of heaven,
> that blaze and burn, swung by an unseen hand.[2]

Oparre, however, is not praying for revenge, but for peace and happiness in the new country. She hints at treason and murder in her past but hopes that those days are over. Speaking of her children she says:

> ----------Blood
> and a black treason lie at their beginning,
> and murdered men look down upon our sleep
> and curse, and will not live again, and yet
> these are the ways of men, and a woman bears them,
> forgiving, and a god forgives. What wars
> they make, what pitiful scars they leave, what eyes
> lie staring at your moon, and will not waken,
> this we have seen together, but these men-children
> are children still, and loved, and a woman's heart
> goes out to them, even guilty.[3]

Oparre, like Euripides' Medea comments on the hardships of women, but she does not lash out against the male sex in burning resentment. Her nature is resigned, loving, and forgiving.

Mrs. McQueston comes into the room unexpectedly and

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1. M. Anderson, op. cit., Act I from stage directions p. 36.
2. M. Anderson, op. cit., Act I, p. 37.
3. Ibid., p. 38.

freezes up at sight of the unwelcome guest. Oparre senses her feeling and apologizes for intruding. Phineas, smelling the odor of incense, comes in and greets her bluntly, making no effort to conceal his dislike. The strained atmosphere is relieved somewhat by Nathaniel's return and by Ruel's and Faith's hospitable welcome to Oparre. Later, when Mrs. McQueston has led Oparre, the little girl Durian, the nurse Toala, and the baby upstairs, Nathaniel speaks sharply to Phineas. He reminds him that the townspeople will wish to use his money whether they like it or not and that Phineas will undoubtedly be among them.

Oparre comes back downstairs with her mother-in-law to interrupt the argument and again apologizes for having come to Salem. She says with humility:

> Yet seeing he loved me, and I stood
> before him flushed with that love, I have dared to say:
> I, even I, Oparre, lower in blood,
> of pagan nurture, may I not step from darkness
> in this garment like a glory he puts round me,
> the garment of his love? Wearing this glory,
> and proud of it, yet timid in what I am
> and know myself to be, I have made my prayer
> that I may be found worthy of your god
> and your cities and your ways, to walk among you
> almost as you--not quite despised.[1]

Oparre shows none of the arrogant pride found in Euripides' Medea but is pliant and soft-spoken. Her desire to assimilate the culture of her husband's land is similar to the wish of Grillparzer's heroine and equally pathetic. Medea, however, received no encouragement from Jason; Oparre

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1. M. Anderson, op. cit., Act I, p. 47.

has Nathaniel's love and support to help her but faces the sullen, impassive hate of Phineas and Mrs. McQueston.

Oparre asks what it is that makes them dislike her, and Nathaniel's mother replies in a passionate outburst:

> Your blood! The black blood in your veins![1]

The color of Oparre's skin is mentioned many times in Anderson's play to stress the unreasonable prejudice that is prevalent in many communities in America. We must not imagine that Oparre is a negress, however. Nathaniel tells us that she is "but one shade darker than I am myself with too much wind and sun."[2]

Oparre then relates to her in-laws her first meeting with Nathaniel when he was saved from burning at the stake by her compassion. Nathaniel, like Jason, owes his life to the barbarian woman he married. She asks for pity and understanding:

> As one new dead,
> feeling warm tears upon his mouth, might grieve
> to lift his heavy clay! Barbarian,
> rooted in under jungle, passionate
> beyond your knowing, gross in my mind and blood,
> still thrusting up toward a memory of light,
> not quite forgotten![3]

This speech gives a graphic picture of the civilization from which she has come and which she hopes to forget. Oparre goes on to hint at deeds of murder, but Nathaniel quickly changes the subject. Phineas' curiosity is aroused, however, and so is ours. Oparre turns to Faith during this scene and asks if

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1. M. Anderson, op. cit., Act I, p. 48.
2. Ibid, p. 32.
3. Ibid., pp 49-50.

she holds any grudge against her. Faith speaks up frankly:

> What lies between
> two women who love one man--that lies between us.
> I meant not to tell you, but when I hear you speak
> I must be honest too. Whatever comes
> or whatever I smile and say in after-time,
> put no trust in me.[1]

In Oparre's answer we detect a Medean ring:

> If I should answer
> as when I was a princess, I would say
> guard yourself well who take it on yourself
> to be enemy of mine! My enemies
> have suffered more than I![2]

We are also reminded that Oparre, like Medea, is a princess in her own country and is proud of her ancestry.

As Oparre is about to go upstairs to prepare for bed Ruel says kindly:

> Good night, Oparre.[3]

Her grateful reply is:

> Thank you.
> It brings a warm flood round my heart to hear
> my name, and gently spoken.--It was one time
> the name of a princess, and I remember her
> and look for too much honor.[4]

When the second act begins six months have elapsed since Nathaniel sailed into the harbor of Salem. Nathaniel in an attempt to win the respect of the town has invested all his money in the family chandlery business and in other concerns, but to no avail. The people of Salem ignore him because of his wife and make no friendly overtures. The elders of Phineas'

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1. M. Anderson, op. cit., Act I, p. 50.
2. Ibid., p. 51.
3. Ibid., p. 53.
4. Ibid., p. 54.

church, although heavily in debt to him, insult him in insidious, deceitful ways. Nathaniel has become more arrogant and falls back on his wealth to salve his wounded pride. Phineas, unable to live in peace with his brother, has moved out of his mother's house.

Nathaniel expresses his loneliness to Faith and his bewilderment at the way she has behaved in the past months. We remember the feelings of Grillparzer's Jason as he says:

> When I walk to the wharf
> three or four men may pass a word with me,
> the rest look the other way--the women sweeping,
> drag in their rugs and shut the doors behind them
> lest I should catch an eye and speak. You'd think
> I carried leprosy. Some half year gone
> I had my last word from you. Your rugs
> are hauled in fast enough when I go by,
> if you recall.[1]

Faith finally confesses that she avoids him because it is difficult for her to accept Oparre as his wife. She has tried to think of her as a white woman but still shrinks from the color of her skin. Nathaniel breaks down and admits that he has begun to resent Oparre because of the vacuum in which he is forced to live, and although he still loves her:

> It's hard to maintain your love--
> You begin to gnaw at this thing you're chained to, even
> hate where you love--curse at it in secret, curse
> yourself and all the world equally. That's why
> I stopped you here this morning. I must speak
> to someone--I must have some touch with the world
> outside those rooms upstairs.[2]

He refers to Toala as "that damned negroid thing that waits on us,"[3] his contempt for the nurse being similar to the

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1. M. Anderson, op. cit., Act II, pp. 68-69.
2. Ibid., p. 72.
3. Ibid., p. 72.

sentiment of Grillparzer's hero. Nathaniel's resistance to the prejudice of Salem has begun to crack, and he cannot help but feel differently toward his family. Oparre comes downstairs to show off a new dress she has just made, and later we see her alone with her husband for the first time in the play. He is pleased with her dress, which is fashioned after the style worn in Salem, and is very gentle with her. It is obvious that he has not allowed Oparre to guess his growing distaste for her. She shares his loneliness, however, saying wistfully:

> ------if the women-folk
> would say once, yes, my dear, we sew tomorrow;
> come, draw a hem with us! Not really caring
> if I accept, not bothering much about me
> as I sit there sewing--oh, smiling a little over
> my odd ways with the needle--but still not angry
> that I should come.[1]

Oparre has seen husbands and wives strolling arm in arm, walking to visit friends, and longs to walk in like fashion with Nathaniel. She would like to pour tea for a small circle of friends instead of hiding in her room day after day.

Oparre asks Nathaniel if he regrets their marriage, and with all sincerity he says that he loves her:

> With the same madness sweet. So that when I touch you
> this ground I stand on shifts away from me
> and we're alone on a certain coral edge
> where you turned to me and I kissed you.[2]

Oparre suggests that they leave Salem and seek some neutral land for shelter. She is willing to live anywhere and wants only to love Nathaniel and be loved, not caring whether

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1. M. Anderson, op. cit., Act II, p. 76.
2. Ibid., p. 80.

they are rich or poor. Money, however, has assumed an important role in Nathaniel's life, being his only defense against the hostility of their environment. He says firmly that they must remain in Salem to protect his investments.

Nathaniel soon discovers that money is not enough protection against the power of Phineas and his friends. They have discovered that Nathaniel's ship, the Queen of the Celebes, was acquired by piracy and now threaten to turn him over to the police. The ship was once named The Wingless Victory and was stolen from the Dutch by Oparre's father. Phineas claims that Nathaniel murdered the Dutch crew, but Nathaniel insists that his only crime was to take the ship from Oparre's father in order to escape from the Celebes. Later, three members of the old crew that sailed with him mutinied, and he was forced to kill them. Phineas refuses to believe his story and reminds his brother that a court would be equally skeptical. He adds:

> And we'll say nothing, burn the diary
> and the logbook--if you send the woman Oparre
> back to her people.[1]

Nathaniel is enraged at this scurrilous attempt to get rid of Oparre and shouts defiantly:

> Well, I prefer to hang.
> The woman Oparre! Damn you, when you speak
> of my wife, do so by title![2]

He adds:

> I owe it to her
> that I'm alive and here. I'm more bound to her

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1. M. Anderson, op. cit., Act II, p. 93.
2. Ibid., p. 93.

> than book, bell and candle binds you! She betrayed
> her father, coming with me. If she went back
> he'd make short work of her.[1]

Nathaniel here refers to a circumstance that is mentioned in all the Medea plays--a daughter's betrayal of her father and the loss of her inheritance as a result. He continues to be belligerent, hoping to bluff Phineas into dropping his charge against him. Phineas stands his ground, however, proving without a doubt that he has a valid case. Nathaniel begins to weaken and tries to placate his brother. Phineas shrewdly concedes to Nathaniel the privilege of going with Oparre, knowing that if Nathaniel leaves his money will still be tied up in Salem.

Nathaniel's fury breaks loose, and he gives vent to his feelings with a barrage of venomous epithets, all leveled at Phineas' "mealy-mouthed church of God."[2] Anderson is again pointing an accusing finger at his father's own profession. Phineas listens to Nathaniel's torrent of words in grim silence, announces that he will inform the authorities immediately and then turns to go.

Toala comes down the stairs at this minute, and Nathaniel reacts violently to her presence. His revulsion breaks down his resistance, and he says to Phineas:

> Send her back then. Send her.
> I'll have nothing to do with it.
>
> And what was good in me

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1. M. Anderson, op. cit., Act II, p. 93.
2. Ibid., p. 96.

goes with her! Make away with her if you must,
but you'll not get what I have![1]

Oparre is sent for and told that she must leave. She misunderstands them, thinking that both she and Nathaniel have been asked to set sail. Nathaniel receives new courage from Oparre's presence and informs Phineas that they will go together. Phineas now rejects this decision, professing concern for the salvation of Nathaniel's soul. Oparre offers to leave ahead of Nathaniel so that he may stay behind to recoup his fortunes before joining her. He jumps at this chance like a drowning man clutching at a life-preserver, and Oparre, hurt by his willingness to let her go, asks to speak with him alone.

She has begun to suspect Nathaniel's reluctance to live a life of exile with his dark-skinned family and finally wrings a tortured admission from him. Oparre now unconsciously begins to think and act like the Oparre of former days when she was a Malayan princess in the jungles of her native country. She strikes out at Nathaniel crying:

A man of wood--
a figure-head of pith and straw--an effigy
cut out of paper would feel more! You tortured!
Your feeble rankling! If you felt pain you'd know
what danger you stand in now! Look to yourself!
Speak!--cry out if you're anguished![2]

She slaps him across the face in her anger, and as Phineas and the others appear at the door she turns on them with:

Come in!
All these white frightened faces, come in and hear!

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1. M. Anderson, op. cit., Act II, p. 97.
2. Ibid., p. 108.

> We have news for you. I have been misled
> a long time by your Christ and his beggar's doctrine,
> written for beggars! Your beseeching, pitiful Christ!
> The old gods are best, the gods of blood and bronze,
> and the arrows dipped in venom!
>
> ---
>
> --------I have been a princess,
> and I remember that gladly now. I come
> of a race that can go mad and strike![1]

In this same passage she recalls with a shudder, as did Euripides' Medea, that her fleshhas touched the flesh of her white husband:

> and we've bred together--it sickens me--we've bred--
> and I've been brought to bed of you! your lips
> were on my mouth! Your rodent flesh on mine,
> in rodent ecstasy! I'll tear you out
> from my breast down to bone and hard
> till that shames's gone from my people.[2]

Durian runs in frightened by the commotion inside, and Oparre again reminds us of Medea as she recoils briefly from her own child because she is also the daughter of Nathaniel. Her last words to Nathaniel and his family are:

> Gazers and fools--
> you have seen an end as of mountains torn asunder
> to bleed in fire, and still you stand and gape,
> witless--with your white witless faces![3]

The two scenes of the last act shift to the cabin of <u>The Wingless Victory</u>. Oparre has just had a fit of madness and as the scene opens kneels before the image of a pagan god. Toala is frightened and tries to calm her. Her mistress will not be comforted, however, and is tortured by the memory of Nathaniel. Her agonizing cries are grimly poetic, but one feels

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1. M. Anderson, <u>op. cit.</u>, Act II, p. 109.
2. <u>Ibid.</u>, pp. 109-110.
3. <u>Ibid.</u>, p. 111.

that Anderson has constructed the scene to suit his poetical flights of fancy rather than to portray the anguished soul of his heroine. Oparre cannot endure the thought of her little girls ending up in the brothels of the Orient and says:

> -------why should I live,
> or they, when life comes down to a candle-end
> to light our crawling.[1]

Toala objects to her suggestion that Oparre and the children must die but admits fearfully that such an end is decreed by the gods for a woman who leaves her father's house against his will.

Toala has kept a poison phial all these months for just such an emergency, and Oparre says:

> Give us to drink of this darkness you have carried
> so far for us.--We have borne names too long
> across the face of earth, but we shall sleep
> and turn back to nameless ground.[2]

The time of the last scene is later on in the evening, and we see Oparre after she has taken poison and given it to her little girls. She rocks Durian to sleep, and Toala holds the already sleeping baby. They lay them down for their last sleep in an inner cabin, returning to wait for their own deaths. Ruel and Happy Penny drop in to offer their help, but Oparre sends them away, knowing there is nothing they can do for her now. She kneels before her god and says:

> ----------He came too soon,
> this Christ of peace. Men are not ready yet.
> Another hundred thousand years they must drink

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1. M. Anderson, op. cit., Act III, Sc. 1, p. 118.
2. Ibid., p. 120.

> your potion of tears and blood. I kneel and adore you,
> having blood on my hands, having found it best
> that evil be given for evil. Receive me now,
> one who might once have been a queen, but followed
> after a soft new dynasty of gods
> that were not mine. I am punished, and must die.[1]

Nathaniel enters at the end of her speech and asks forgiveness. Oparre will not accept his apology nor can she forgive him for his weakness in turning against her. She says proudly:

> And though you swear till the night come down in fire
> to vouch your word, you are not believed, and my blood,
> my dark blood, richer and prouder than your own,
> will pour on the ground before I stretch a hand
> to the race you draw from.
>
> ———————
>
> Your race
> of kings will breed water-thin in the after-time
> for lack of what we could lend you--fire at the heart,
> the word that goes with the hand, a dignity
> savage, imperial, choosing rather to die
> than live unwanted.[2]

Oparre tries to prevent Nathaniel from saying goodbye to the children, but he ignores her protests and enters the inner cabin. Toala and the two little girls are dead. Oparre sinks to the floor as the poison begins to take effect, and Nathaniel shouts:

> This is revenge, a fiend's
> revenge! It's as well you die! A fiend out of hell
> could do no worse.[3]

His anger gives way in the prsence of his dying wife, however, and he kneels beside her overcome with remorse. Ruel enters as she dies, and the two brothers decide to sail with

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1. M. Anderson, op. cit., Act III, Sc. 2., p. 129.
2. Ibid., pp. 129-130
3. Ibid., p. 132.

Oparre on her last voyage in The Wingless Victory. Nathaniel says sadly:

> I go
> to be with her while I can. What I've left of life
> I shall know what it is to love one dead,
> and seek her and not find. Let the sands of years
> sift quickly and wash long. I shall have no rest
> till my dust lies down with hers.[1]

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1. M. Anderson, op. cit., Act III Sc. 2, p. 133.

3. Criticism and Comment

The Wingless Victory gives a modern slant to a story that is similar to the old Greek myth. Despite the American sea-coast setting and differences in names, Anderson has carried over many features from the Medea legend. Oparre, like Medea, has a barbaric background and has fled her country in the wake of bloodshed. She is banished from her husband's land and loses favor in his eyes. Before the play ends she kills her two children but also takes her own life.

The main conflict, however, is not Nathaniel's wish to be rid of Oparre but the deep-rooted prejudice of Phineas and Mrs. McQueston. Their hostility and the snobbery of Salem gnaws at Nathaniel's self-respect until he too becomes prejudiced. Anderson puts undue emphasis on color and race, but this emphasis is typical of the social plays of today.

Oparre is the only heroine of the eight plays we have compared to take her own life. The children die off-stage in keeping with classical tradition, but Oparre dies in full view of the audience. Anderson could not easily pass up the opportunity to bring his tragedy to a close with the poetic utterances of a dying woman.

The dramatist also borrows from Greek tragedy "the other woman" and the children's nurse. Faith Ingalls, however, is not a rival in the sense that Euripides' Creusa was for the hand of Jason, nor does she arouse any jealousy in Oparre's heart. Anderson does not deliberately play up her attributes

to contrast the failings of Oparre, a method which Grillparzer used very effectively.

Toala has very little to say in The Wingless Victory and except as an irritant to Nathaniel has little importance in the play. She is devoted to Oparre and the children, but until the last act stays timidly in the background.

In Anderson's play the children have beome girls, one a mere infant, the other about six years old. Their role is not very important, although Durian is given some attention. She is portrayed as a pretty, winsome child, and in the last act we feel a sudden rush of pity for the child being rocked to death on her mother's lap.

The Reverend Phineas McQueston and his sharp-tongued mother are responsible for the tragic conflict in The Wingless Victory. They are both caricatures rather than characterizations. Their minds are warped, perverted, narrow, and evil. Sex, race, money--everything is an obsession with them. Typical of Mrs. McQueston and her preaching son is this speech:

> ----and now another
> comes home to roost, this with his pockets lined
> in gold that might be a stay to my old age,
> only he sleeps a heathen whore in his bed,
> and I'm cut off for her![1]

Ruel is given a very sympathetic portrayal, but his characterization is rather weak. He is a charming ne'er-do-well, pleasant, warm-hearted, and the staunch friend of Nathaniel and Oparre.

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1. M. Anderson, op. cit., Act I, p. 23.

Nathaniel is very different from the Jasons we have met. He is fundamentally decent, good-natured, and courageous. He is an adventurer, like Jason, but not a grasping opportunist. His love for Oparre is deep and strong, but he is not self-sufficient enough to exist in a world made up only of his wife and children. He desires approbation from society and other companionship to make his life complete. Cut off from the rest of the town, he flashes his wealth in defiance and gradually becomes close-fisted and money conscious. His futile attempt to buy himself into society wears down his resistance, and the pressure becomes too great for him. The piracy charge crumbles his defense, and he gives in to Phineas and the church elders.

He recovers his moral stature in the last act but is too late to avert tragedy. And so he sails out to sea aboard The Wingless Victory with the bodies of his wife and children. Faith, early in the play, gives a good picture of Nathaniel:

> Here's a brother of yours returning,
> the giddiest, maddest tar that ever followed
> the whistling of a wind--and damned his eyes
> if he cared where he went--and in he blows
> with a fortune reaped on the outlands of the moon
> somewhere, anywhere-went out with half a florin
> to bless himself, and back now a merchant prince
> with gold he coined in a sunset![1]

Oparre has not the strength, the magnificence of Euripides' Medea. Her nature is more akin to Grillparzer's Colchian princess. At the beginning of the play she is restrained, submissive, and anxious to please. We pity her painful effort

1. M. Anderson, op. cit., Act I, pp. 16-17.

to fit into a new society, and look on with compassion as she fails to win the esteem or even tolerance of the cold-hearted community.

We are conscious of Oparre's barbaric background, but despite Phineas' comment on "the ancient witchcraft by which she lives,"[1] Oparre does not possess the magic arts of Medea. She is completely human and mortal and not descended from a god.

She retains a veneer of Western culture until goaded beyond endurance. Then she becomes pagan, and kneels before the vengeful gods of her old country. Her fury reaches such heights that she loses her sanity temporarily and rips her dress with a dagger. But she does not murder in cold blood nor in the heat of a jealous passion. She merely obeys the laws of her pagan religion and in killing the children believes that she is saving them from a worse fate.

Her love for Nathaniel is expressed in this delicate, imaginative passage:

> Suppose
> a whole world built on a word, a sky and stars,
> grass underfoot, sand at the ocean's edge,
> and men and women, and all they have--but this
> one word unsaid and the world's not there. Was never
> there, has not been, cannot be imagined. This
> is a woman's world when she loves. If I should lose him,
> if one word were unsaid, the earth's gone. Then
> where it rode, there's only a little ailing wind
> lost quickly in the night.[2]

Anderson's portrayal of Oparre is sympathetic throughout

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1. M. Anderson, op. cit., Act II, p. 102.
2. M. Anderson, op. cit., Act II, pp. 85-86.

the play, and the dignity and depth of her character dominates the action of The Wingless Victory. We miss the force and power of Euripides' Medea but carry away a memory of a proud, heroic woman caught in a tragic web of prejudice and hate.

The Wingless Victory is a well written play, containing a clearly developed plot, suspense, and the true essence of tragedy. Anderson's heart often clouds his mind, however, and he allows poetry to thrust the story into the shadows. Racial prejudice becomes too important a theme and seems out of place in a poetical tragedy. But by insisting upon "the glory of earth-born men and women", Maxwell Anderson has restored to tragedy the heroic pattern so sadly missing since the advent of Ibsen, and through the medium of poetry has attained an unforgettable richness and depth of feeling.[1]

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1. W. S. Clark, op. cit., pp. 1084-1085.

X. CONCLUSION

Looking back on the Medea plays which have been included in my comparative study, one discovers several definite trends. These trends coincide with the trends of world drama, the characteristics of the plays mirroring the development of the drama through the centuries.

Euripides' Medea is representative of the glorious era of Greek tragedy, an era which produced the most powerful drama of any period in world history. His portrayal of Medea is a masterpiece of sympathetic understanding of the soul of a proud, passionate woman. He builds his story around the vibrant conflict between Jason and Medea, and his allowance for a double responsibility in the crime committed is a singularly wide-minded conception.[1]

Seneca retains the essential structure of Euripides' tragedy, such as the chorus, but he shifts his sympathy from Medea to Jason. He portrays her as a savage enchantress, whereas Euripides' interpretation was of a completely human woman endowed with super-natural powers. But Seneca, in a terror-driven and cruel age, could not let any sympathy be shown for a woman who had strained or broken a moral law.[2]

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1. Eleanor F. Jourdain, The Drama in Europe, Appendix I, p. 151.
2. Ibid., Chapt. I, p. 20.

In Seneca's Medea the children are killed on-stage, which is a departure from the restraint of Greek tragedy.

Corneille drops the chorus and substitutes a confidante in its place. He follows Seneca's version in many instances but shows the deaths of Creon, Creusa, and Jason at the end of the play. Medea's sorcery is given some emphasis, but the dramatist rationalizes in many ways to justify her actions.

Richard Glover's treatment is sentimental and melodramatic, being written primarily for the closet as were so many plays in the eighteenth century. His Medea shows Senecan influence, including the presence of a chorus. Creon is the villain of the play, Jason and Medea both being portrayed sympathetically. Medea does not kill her children to obtain revenge, but commits the crime in a fit of madness.

The Medea of Franz Grillparzer approaches a modern treatment with emphasis placed on the pathos of Medea's difficult position in an alien land. He does not drop Medea's witchcraft, however, and she murders Creusa and her children primarily as a deed of vengeance. Two interesting innovations are the children's rejection of Medea and the emphasis placed on Jason's affection for Creusa. Symbolism, in the form of the golden fleece, and a belief in the necessity of justice are important in Grillparzer's play.

Ernest Legouvé's Medée is a melodramatic, emotional attempt to interpret the Medea legend. His rejection scene is imitative of Grillparzer but not so effective. Some suspense is gained in the first meeting between Medea and Creusa when

neither is aware of the other's identity.

Henrik Ibsen's A Doll's House is not the story of Medea, but the characterization of the principal characters reminds us of Euripides' Medea and Jason. His powerful presentation of the feminine viewpoint is an echo of the Greek tragedian's attitude toward the position of Athenian women in society.

Maxwell Anderson's The Wingless Victory is the most recent treatment given the legend of Jason and Medea. His story has a new, modern setting, but similarities to the Medea plays are still evident. The essential conflict arises from the enmity of Nathaniel's family, and Anderson stresses the problem of racial prejudice.

The dominant themes of Euripides' Medea are: the antagonism between sexes; the jealousy and wrath of a woman abandoned by her husband; scorn for a barbarian wife; man's desire for security; the heroine's fear of laughter and her pride in her ancestry. These themes recur in many of the plays. Antagonism between man and woman, the crux of Euripides' play, appears as a main issue only in A Doll's House. But Medea's jealousy and wrath are repeated again and again, as is her pride in being descended from gods and kings. In Grillparzer's Medea, the play which most successfully attains the beauty and dignity of Euripidean verse, we find emphasis given to the ostracization of Medea by Corinthian society, Jason's materialistic desires, and Medea's fear of laughter. Oparre's desire to be accepted by the townspeople of Salem is a repetition of prejudice against

a foreigner or barbarian.

The story of Medea continues to inspire the dramatic art of the world. The latest interpretation of Euripides' sublime tragedy was given by Martha Graham, famous exponent of modern dance. In the March 10, 1947 issue of Time Magazine an article appeared under the heading "The Priestess Speaks", from which I quote:

> ----Last week, to packed houses in Manhattan, Dance-Dramatist Graham unleashed two new messages for the cultists, the confused and the curious.
>
> In Cave of the Heart, done to music by Samuel Barber, Choreographer Graham stalked deep into dark Freudian corridors. Using the Medea legend as a starting "state of mind," she did a dance "of possessive and destroying love, a love which feeds upon itself and, when it is overthrown, is fulfilled only in revenge." Actually, the dance spoke for itself, and well; nobody needed program notes to interpret her hard, sure movements of jealous hatred.

The influence of the Medea legend is now reaching into the future. John Gielgud will bring to the stage Robinson Jeffers' adaptation of Euripides' Medea, and Judith Anderson will appear in the title role. Gielgud's production is scheduled for the early fall months, and a Boston engagement will begin on October 20, 1947.

The story of Medea in world drama is an active, enduring memorial to the genius of Euripides and to the Greek myth which he chose for dramatic presentation. The powerful tragedy of Jason and Medea has moved across the years of all the glorious civilizations of the past, and its steady course is now sweeping into the world of tomorrow.

ABSTRACT

There are sixteen extant plays in the history of the drama which make use of some phase of the Medea motif. The dramatists concerned are: Euripides, Seneca, De La Peruse, Corneille, Longepierre, Pellegrin, Clement, Glover, Grillparzer, Read, Legouve, Ibsen, Mendes, Lenormand, Buel, and Anderson. I have chosen eight plays for comparison and they are: Medea, by Euripides; Medea, by Seneca; Medée, by Pierre Corneille; Medea, by Richard Glover; Medea, by Franz Grillparzer; Medée, by Ernest Legouvé; A Doll's House, by Henrik Ibsen; and The Wingless Victory, by Maxwell Anderson.

The legend on which these plays are based relates the story of Jason, his quest for the golden fleece, and his union with Medea who obtained the fleece for him. Jason and Medea flee from Colchis to Jason's country where she eventually murders Jason's usurping uncle. They are again forced to flee and arrive in Corinth with two children who have been born in the meantime. As the years go by Jason tires of Medea and makes a more profitable match with the Corinthian King's daughter, Creusa. Medea avenges Jason's infidelity by enveloping Creusa and Creon in flames that spring forth mysteriously from a poisoned robe. Medea completes her revenge by killing her

two children and escaping from Jason's fury in a winged chariot drawn by dragons.

Euripides' Medea was first produced in 431 B.C. during the first year of the Peloponnesian war at the annual religious festival, City Dionysia. Euripides, never very popular with his contemporaries, received only third prize in the competition.

His treatment follows the myth very closely and is distinguished by the human, psychological interpretation of Medea's character. Brought up as a princess, untamed in spirit, and believing it only right to inflict pain upon one's enemies, she refuses to accept Jason's marriage to Creusa. Her revenge is to kill the people closest to Jason's heart, and by escaping to Athens where she will be given refuge by the King, she avoids the laughter and derision that would have been her lot as a captive. Jason is left a broken man, having been justly punished for breaking his faith to obtain security in a king's household.

Seneca follows the pattern set down in Greek tragedy, but his play reflects the terror and bloodshed of the early Christian era. Medea appears in an unsympathetic light, and her performance is distinguished by incantations to the spirits of the lower world. She kills her children on the stage, one child being stabbed before the horrified eyes of Jason. Euripides devotes a long descriptive passage to the narration of the circumstances surrounding the death of Creon and Creusa. Seneca says only a few words about this powerful scene. Medea

again escapes from Corinth in a winged chariot but does not take the children with her as in Euripides' tragedy.

Corneille's Medée is typical of the dramatist and of classical French drama. The chorus has been dropped, and instead we have long expository scenes between a principal character and a confidante. Corneille's purpose is to arouse admiration, and the lengthy moral discourses of Jason and Medea attempt to justify their actions. Euripides and Seneca present the arguments of their characters, but their purpose is to develop dramatic conflict, not to rationalize. Innovations found in Corneille are the presence of Aegeus as a rejected suitor for the hand of Creusa, and the deaths of Creon, Creusa, and Jason before the audience. Medea is not as savage as Seneca's heroine but is less human than the Medea of Greek tragedy.

Richard Glover's sentimental version lacks power but has several new twists. Medea arrives in Corinth some time after Jason's arrival and discovers that he is about to marry Creusa. He relents, but Medea's stubbornness prevents her from accepting his apology. She kills the children in a fit of madness after Jason's marriage but does not kill Creusa. Creon, portrayed as an evil tyrant, is killed by an angry mob. Medea escapes in a chariot, but she does not go exultantly. Her grief is as intense as Jason's, and her parting words to him are forgiving and gentle. Glover's pseudo-classical tragedy, with its chorus and penned in cretics, iambics and trochaics, was presented on the stage in the eighteenth century but is manifestly a closet drama.

Franz Grillparzer, an Austrian playwright, embraces the whole story of the Jason and Medea myth in a trilogy called The Golden Fleece. Medea was performed in 1820 in the great century of German literature. It was written during a time of personal tragedy in Grillparzer's life and contains much of the philosophy of the unhappy dramatist. It comes closest to attaining the stature of Greek tragedy and is very similar in tone to Euripides' play. Grillparzer's Medea tries to bury the past, and the tragedy lies in her failure to do so. The final blow to Medea is dealt by her own children when they refuse to accompany her into exile, wishing to remain with the beautiful, soft-spoken princess. Grillparzer uses Creusa as a definite contrast to Medea and emphasizes Medea's jealousy of her. Medea does not escape from Corinth in a chariot but merely walks off the stage after urging the prostrate Jason to atone for his sins. In Grillparzer's play, the golden fleece is a symbol of evil, and the catastrophe of Medea comes as a punishment for striving after wrongful gain.

Ernest Legouvé's Medée was written during a period which produced drama of poor quality in France and elsewhere in Europe. Legouvé's tragedy is artificial, jerky, and melodramatic. His only interesting innovation is a scene between Medea and Creusa in which the two women have a friendly conversation, not knowing the identity of the other. A mutual discovery results in a tense moment which momentarily lifts Medée out of its usual lethargy. Medea's children again reject her in Legouvé's play, but this scene lacks the pathos and dramatic irony of Grillparzer's

tragedy.

Henrik Ibsen shocked the age in which he lived as Euripides had done over two thousand years before him. A Doll's House was banned in England and America for many years, and it was discussed in hushed tones in social gatherings. Ibsen, like Euripides, came forth with a strident declaration of the independence of women. His heroine, Nora, kicks over her domestic traces and walks out on her husband and children. Her exit can be compared to Medea's triumphant escape in a chariot, although the modern treatment is to have a door close off-stage.

Maxwell Anderson's The Wingless Victory is the most recent drama to use the Medea motif. He changes the setting to a New England seacoast town and the time to the beginning of the nineteenth century. His hero is an adventurous sea captain who returns to his home town after a long absence. He comes laden with treasure and brings a Malayan wife and two daughters. Nathaniel's narrow-minded, malicious brother and mother do all in their power to make the Malayan woman feel an outsider and succeed in causing a rift between Nathaniel and Oparre. Oparre gives poison to herself and the children and dies in the arms of her remorseful husband. Anderson's portrayal of Oparre is similar to the characterization of Grillparzer's Medea.

A recent interpretation of the Medea legend has been given by the modern danseuse, Martha Graham, in a selection called Cave of the Heart. Miss Graham's dance is a Freudian portrayal of a woman whose possessive love destroys all that

it touches.

The durability of the ancient Greek myth concerning Jason and Medea has been brought into sharp focus by current preparations for a production of Robinson Jeffers' adaptation of Euripides' Medea. John Gielgud is staging this new revival of the legend, and Judith Anderson will appear in the part of Medea. A Boston opening is scheduled for October 20, 1947.

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